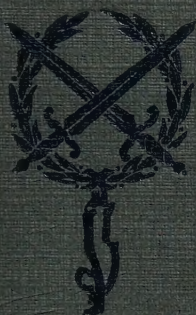


DAVID LLOYD GEORGE WAR MINISTER

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DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

WAR MINISTER

BY
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(*Author of "Sir Edward Cook," a Biography; "Life and Letters of Sir Hubert Herkomer"; "The Genoa Conference," etc.*)

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TO MY WIFE

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DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

WAR MINISTER

CHAPTER I

PROPHECY AND PREPARATION

DURING the years that preceded the catastrophe of 1914 England and the British world were not left without prophetic warnings of what might happen. As early as 1909 the stupendous events that awaited us had begun to cast a heavy shadow before. No one who was present at the inaugural banquet of the Imperial Press Conference in 1909 will ever forget the impression made by Lord Rosebery's address to the delegates. Never before had the vague anxiety and menace involved in the competitive growth of armaments of war crystallized itself into such a definite and responsible utterance. Lord Rosebery was a statesman who commanded universal respect. With wise intuition and splendid eloquence he had voiced an Empire sentiment quite purified from any taint of Jingoism or that "Asiatic" Imperialism we rather associate with the name of Disraeli. He had held up the ideal of a "free, tolerant and unaggressive Empire," to quote his own carefully chosen epithets. There was nothing of the alarmist or the sensationalist in his constitution, so that his hearers on this occasion could attach the fullest possible meaning to his words without fear of being misled. The reader should furnish from his own imagination the intensity of silence in which these words were uttered :

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“There is a hush in Europe in which one might almost hear a leaf fall to the ground. There is an absolute absence of any questions which ordinarily lead to war. All forebodes peace, and yet, at the same time, combined with this total absence of all questions of friction, there never was in the history of the world so threatening and overpowering a preparation for war. Without any tangible reason we see the nations preparing new armaments. They cannot indeed arm any more men on land, so they have to seek new armaments on the sea; piling up this enormous preparation as if for some approaching Armageddon. We can and we will build Dreadnoughts or whatever the newest type of ship may be so long as we have a shilling to spend on them or a man to put into them. But I am not sure that even that will be enough, and I think it may be your duty to take back to your young Dominions across the seas this message and this impression: that some personal duty and responsibility for national defence rests on every man and citizen of the Empire. Tell your peoples—if they can believe it—the deplorable way in which Europe is relapsing into barbarism, and the pressure that is put upon this little England to defend itself, its liberties—and yours. But take this message also back with you—that the old country is right at heart; that there is no failing or weakness in her; and that she rejoices in renewing her youth in her giant Dominions beyond the seas. You will return to your homes, missionaries of empire, missionaries of the most extensive and most unselfish Empire known to history.”

Mr. Balfour's forecast on the same occasion was justified by the event. He, too, like Lord Rosebery, had a good deal of that “pocourantism,” that composure in flood

STRIKING FORECASTS

or earthquake, which is said to mark the highly born and highly educated Briton. Mr. Balfour has a wonderful faculty for impromptu speech, but nobody ever attributed any words of his to post-prandial elevation or any other non-rational influence. His speech carried its full weight :

“ If the fate of empires depends on fleet superiority, then that superiority must be shown in home waters. The German Ocean, the Channel, the neighbourhood of these islands, possibly the Mediterranean—these are the places at which, if there is to be an Armageddon, the Armageddon will take place, and it is folly for us to attempt or to dare to dissipate these fleet constituents so that when the time of crisis arises we shall not be able to have that concentration upon which our whole Imperial destinies and the destinies of each separate portion of the Empire really and substantially depend. The fate of Australia, the fate of New Zealand, of Canada, South Africa, India—that is not going to be decided in the Pacific ; it is not going to be decided in the Indian Ocean ; it is going to be decided here. And no man can now speak on this subject of Imperial Defence without a note of anxiety in his voice.”

But the most uncannily wise or fortunate “ voor-trekking ” into futurity was reserved for Lord Roberts, whose name a Briton can never mention without a certain touch of self-accusing remorse. He remarked at one of the Conference gatherings, in the course of an admonitory speech, that “ a shot fired in the Balkan Peninsula might produce an explosion which would change the fortunes of every remotest colony of our Empire.”

This soldier-statesman's old age was devoted to a ceaseless effort to induce his country to prepare for a war whose inevitability he surely foresaw. In him, if

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

ever in any man, "experience did attain to something of prophetic strain," and a passage culled from a speech he delivered in Manchester on October 22nd, 1912, when the cataract was nearer, will serve to recall his great but unavailing crusade :

" Now at the present day, in the year 1912, just as in 1866, and just as in 1870, war will take place the instant the German forces by land and sea are, by their superiority at every point, as certain of victory as anything in human calculation can be made certain. 'Germany strikes when Germany's hour has struck.' This is the time-honoured policy of her Foreign Office. That was the policy relentlessly followed by Bismarck in 1866 and 1870 ; it has been her policy decade by decade since that date ; it is her policy at the present hour. And, gentlemen, it is an excellent policy. It is, or should be, the policy of every nation prepared to play a great part in history."

This rather grim endorsement of Prussianism may be wished away. But all must allow that if any public man ever had a right to say "I told you so" to a stiff-necked people it was Lord Roberts, and it is an enduring credit to his "gentilhood" and self-command that he never uttered that tempting phrase.

British instinct, and certainly Liberal principle, were averse to military conscription, and Lord Roberts broke himself vainly in the pre-war years against this obstruction. But conscription in the end had to be, and it came in the midst of the struggle with the approval and positive suasion of the great Liberal War Minister.

During the eight years preceding the war a Liberal Government, firstly under Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and then under Mr. Asquith, was in power. The Liberal party, in the country and in Parliament, was divided

THE TWO LIBERAL SECTIONS

into two sections, corresponding roughly with the old Imperialist and Little England or pro-Boer tabernacles. The internal conflict found its battle-field in the question of naval and military expenditure. The peace and retrenchment section was not disposed to be hustled out of its principles by the boggy of an inevitable European war. It was not convinced that Germany was arming in order to challenge British sea-power and British trade. It believed that the danger—if danger there was—could be weathered by some mutual agreement for the limitation of armaments or even, in the view of the more extreme Pacifists, by the example of a one-sided reduction on the part of Great Britain.

It would be a mistake to suppose that this section of Liberalism, which was intent on disarmament and arbitration and Hague Conferences, consisted merely of a few cranks. It represented probably two-thirds of the Liberal party. It professed, not without reason, to embody the orthodox and Gladstonian tradition, and its ideas were characteristic of a wider spiritual movement which was to find its most advanced and practical expression in the covenant of the League of Nations.

By temperament, nurture and conviction, Mr. Lloyd George was the protagonist of this section of his party. He was "the most dissident of Dissenters," and the movement found its chief strength and fervour in the Nonconformist congregations. Strange to say, he was supported in these specific views by Mr. Winston Churchill, a late convert from Conservatism, who differed from him singularly in birth and upbringing, and indeed in most human attributes, and was no more a Baptist or a Methodist than Mr. Lowther was an agricultural labourer.

On the other side stood Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Haldane, and, we must add, Mr. McKenna, who kept a strong but unobtrusive hand on the "hot

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

gospellers" in the party, and directed its policy along reasonable and practical lines.

In these days Mr. Lloyd George was engaged in a warfare not against flesh and blood, but against the spectres of poverty and wretchedness that walked abroad in the land. Indeed he applied this metaphor to himself when introducing his democratic Budget in 1909. "This," he said, "is a War Budget. It is for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness." He had no mind that the money he was raising for these purposes should be spent on wasteful and destructive armaments. He was opposed to building "gigantic flotillas to encounter mythical armadas," and we could not afford, rich nation as we were, "to build navies against nightmares."

But Mr. Lloyd George was no mere dreamer with his head in the clouds. Amid all his ideals and enthusiasms he always walked, as Goethe says of Napoleon Bonaparte, "auf festen Füßen." His feet were planted firmly on mother earth, and in this same Budget speech he took care to disassociate himself from the extremists of his own following.

"We all value too highly," he said, "the immunity which this country has long enjoyed from the horrors of an invaded land to endanger it for lack of timely provision. That immunity is a great national asset. It is an essential part of that great national wealth which security has enabled us to build up. It means an inviolable guarantee for our national freedom and independence. Many a time it has been a citadel and sole guarantee which has saved the menaced liberties of Europe from an impending doom. We do not intend to put in jeopardy the naval supremacy which is not only essential to our national existence but to the vital interests of Western civilization."

IMPERIAL PREFERENCE

More than once has Mr. Lloyd George shown this faculty of turning round upon himself, of refusing to be hustled into extremes and off the foundation of abiding realities by the absorbing interest of the moment. It is the faculty which makes of him a statesman as distinguished from a dreamer or a fanatic. A very signal instance occurred during the strenuous debates in the Colonial Conference of 1907 on Imperial Preference in which Mr. Lloyd George found a "formidable opposite" in Mr. Deakin. The English statesman, who was then President of the Board of Trade, was not minded to let the Dominion Premiers and the British preferentialists take all the credit of appreciating the value and meaning of the British Empire. He claimed a large, common and undebatable ground for the two sides to the controversy. He said :

" We heartily concur in the view which has been presented by the Colonial Ministers, that the Empire would be a great gainer if many of the products now purchased from foreign countries could be produced and purchased within the Empire. In Britain we have the greatest market in the world. We are the greatest purchasers of produce raised or manufactured outside our own boundaries. A very large proportion of this produce could very well be raised in the colonies, and any reasonable and workable plan that would tend to increase the proportion of the produce which is bought by us from the colonies, and by the colonies from us and from each other, must necessarily enhance the resources of the Empire as a whole. A considerable part of the surplus population of the United Kingdom which now goes to foreign lands in search of a livelihood might then find it to its profit to pitch its tents somewhere under the Flag, and the Empire would gain in riches of material and of men. We agree with our colonial

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

comrades that all this is worth concerted effort, even if that effort at the outset costs us something. The federation of free commonwealths is worth making some sacrifice for. One never knows when its strength may be essential to the great cause of human freedom, and that is priceless."

Seven years from the date on which these sentences were spoken the strength of the free commonwealths of the Empire was indeed essential to the cause of human freedom. The last two sentences in particular have often been quoted as showing that Mr. Lloyd George's opinions were not hardened in any narrow mould, and that he had in him the making of a good Imperialist. But even in the Boer War when Mr. Lloyd George was regarded as the typical "Little Englander," if indeed he was more than a "Little Welshman," he would have confessed to no such limitations. I remember hearing him say to a friend of pronounced Imperialist views who rallied him on his pro-Boerism that he was as good an Imperialist as anybody who claimed that title.

Liberalism has always been the active and unfailing champion of the national sentiment wherever it has manifested itself. It has sometimes welcomed even prematurely the emergence of a new national unit. It was this spirit of sympathy which prompted Gladstone to declare that "Jefferson Davis had made a nation" of the insurgent American states, and which has largely determined the Liberal attitude to the British Empire. At the same time, and without any real inconsistency, Liberalism has always been opposed to any manifestations of an ultra-national sentiment at home. This does not mean that the Liberal would not defend the freedom and independence of his own nation, but that he is opposed to those wanton and selfish hostilities to which every democracy is prone, that he is willing to place himself

LIBERALS AND THE GERMAN MENACE

in the position of foreign nations and to interpret their policy in the fairest and most favourable light.

A Liberalism so constituted was naturally suspicious of the anti-German propaganda that was becoming vocal in this country, and sceptical of the dangerous intention that was said to underlie the development of German commerce and sea-power. It is not surprising that in face of the undoubted fact of German competition on sea and land, and the ominous warnings by responsible statesmen and distinguished soldiers, the Liberal party should exhibit internal divisions and that a Liberal leader should not always speak with the same accent and purport.

Liberals of the "main stream" during these years were constantly for peace and friendship with Germany, and even for a definite Anglo-German *entente* to match those we had entered into with France and Russia. Why, they asked, should Germany not build a navy? Why should England suppose that the point of German military and naval equipment was directed against herself? What was this inevitable Armageddon between the two nations but a scarecrow in which the birds themselves would soon be building their nests? Might not German militarism be safely left to the Social Democratic party and other Liberal movements which were gathering strength in the Fatherland? Meanwhile could not the danger of war best be averted by a common agreement for the limitation of armaments?

Such was the general mentality of Liberalism, and it found its most eloquent expression in the speeches of Mr. Lloyd George, who, in 1908, reached the exalted position of Chancellor of the Exchequer, when Mr. Asquith was transferred from that office to the Premiership. Down to that date Germany had shown no willingness to reciprocate the British diminuendo in naval construction. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had reduced the programme of four Dreadnoughts a year to three in 1906

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

and 1907, and two in 1908. In 1905 that great seaman and engaging personality, Sir John Fisher, had checkmated Admiral Tirpitz's naval programme by designing the new type known as the "Dreadnought," and shifting the main base of the British Navy from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. In 1908 Admiral Tirpitz was to reply to Fisher's move on the board by the famous Naval Law of that year. The duelling-ground was determined, and the duel fairly begun.

In the diplomatic sphere the most important event had been the first Moroccan crisis in 1905, when war between France and Germany had been brought dangerously near. But war had been avoided owing to France's climb-down and the sacrifice of M. Delcassé. The Act of Algeciras (April 7th, 1906) closed the crisis for the time, but it was to revive with still more dangerous insistence in the year 1911.

The intelligent British elector who inscribed his cross on the ballot-paper at the end of December, 1905, and voted a Liberal Government into a long lease of power, was not fully aware that at the very moment a diplomatic crisis existed which might very well have antedated by nearly a decade the great European War. "If the high gods," writes Mr. Walter Roch,* "take any real interest in politics and have any ironic humour, they must have laughed during this election." In these very days M. Cambon was asking Sir Edward Grey whether, if the crisis developed into war between France and Germany, England would give France armed support, to which Sir Edward Grey replied that, if France were compelled to fight over the Morocco affair, England would stand by her. "Public opinion in this country would rally to the material support of France." Military conversations ensued between ourselves and our neighbours, in which it was elicited that England was quite unpre-

* "Mr. Lloyd George and the War" (p. 10).

SPEECH TO THE PEACE SOCIETY

pared to give any effective military, as distinct from naval, assistance in such a war. One of the results of this first Morocco crisis was Lord Haldane's reorganization of the army, which served us so well in the danger of the second crisis, and three years later when the test actually came. Henceforth we were in a position to place on the Belgian frontier a force of six infantry and one cavalry divisions in thirteen days.

This brief summary will serve to show the circumstances in which Mr. Lloyd George addressed a meeting called by the Peace Society at the Queen's Hall, July, 1908. There is no doubt that the speech was cordially approved by the vast majority of Liberals in the country who read its report over their breakfast tables. We may go further and say that the great British public itself, always inclined to toleration and good-fellowship, and never disposed to anticipate trouble, acquiesced for the most part in this view right down to the eve of the war. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said, *inter alia* :

" I want to put two considerations to you from the German point of view. . . . Men have not got the imagination to project themselves into the position of the other party. Now just consider for a moment. You say, ' Why should Germany be frightened of us ? Why should she build because of us ? ' Let me put two considerations to you. We started it : it is not they who have started. We had an overwhelming preponderance at sea which could have secured us against any conceivable enemy. We were not satisfied ; we said : ' Let there be Dreadnoughts.' . . . Well, let us put another consideration before you which I don't think is sufficiently pointed out. We always say we must have what we call a ' two-Power standard.' What does that mean ? You must have a Navy large enough to

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oppose a combination of any two naval Powers. So, if we had Russia and France, Germany and France, Germany and Italy, we should always have a fleet large enough to defend our shores against any combination of the two greatest naval Powers in Europe. This has been our standard.

“Look at the position of Germany. Her Army is to her what our Navy is to us—her sole defence against invasion. She has not got a two-Power standard. She may have a stronger Army than France, than Russia, than Italy, than Austria, but she is between two great Powers, who, in combination, could pour in a vastly greater number of troops than she has. Don't forget that when you wonder why Germany is frightened at alliances and understandings and some sorts of mysterious workings which appear in the Press and hints in the *Times* and *Daily Mail* . . . Here is Germany in the middle of Europe, with France and Russia on either side, and with a combination of armies greater than hers. Suppose we had had a possible combination which would lay us open to invasion—suppose Germany and France, or Germany and Austria, had fleets which, in combination, would be stronger than ours. Would we not be frightened, would we not build, would not we arm? Of course we should. I want our friends, who think that because Germany is a little frightened she really means mischief to us, to remember that she is frightened for a reason which would frighten us under the same circumstances.”

A few weeks after this speech was delivered, Mr. Winston Churchill, who had adopted the Liberal creed with the fervour of a new convert, made a speech on similar lines in which he paid a glowing tribute to the strong, patient, industrious German people. “We rejoice in

MR. McKENNA'S NAVAL PROGRAMME

everything that brings them good. We wish them well from the bottom of our hearts."

In 1908, Mr. McKenna, who had succeeded Lord Tweedmouth at the Admiralty, cast a fine apple of discord upon the Liberal council-table in the form of his Navy Estimates for the following financial year, 1909-1910. They were prompted by the German Naval Bill of 1908 which was Admiral Tirpitz's *riposte* to Lord Fisher's Dreadnoughts. This ambitious programme contemplated an ultimate German equipment of fifty-eight Dreadnoughts, that number to be completed by the construction of four annually, from 1908-1911, and two from 1911 to 1917. There was also a prospect, not actually realised, of a considerable acceleration in the rate of building.

This brought us up more directly than ever against the German Reich as our sole and serious competitor for naval supremacy. Mr. McKenna, who was not distracted by other interests and sentiments from maintaining our first line of defence, and who acted throughout with an inflexible determination, proposed to lay down six Dreadnoughts in 1909, and six more in each of the two following years. The result was a violent discussion in the Cabinet which threatened even to break up the Government. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill led the opposition, while Mr. McKenna had the support of his own Board and of Sir Edward Grey in particular among his fellow-ministers.

Sir Edward Grey, though a persistent worker for peace, was not inclined to purchase it at any price. He was one of those British statesmen, to the number of whom Mr. Baldwin seems recently to have been added, who take part in public affairs against their own desires and to the sacrifice of pursuits which they would greatly prefer. They thus fulfil the well-known Platonic desideratum in a statesman. "That state," wrote the philosopher,*

* "The Republic," Bk. vi.

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“ in which those who are to rule are least anxious to do so will be governed in the best and least factious manner, while the state whose rulers are of a contrary character will be administered in a contrary way.” The former class of statesman, he goes on to say, will be ambitious of other distinctions, and will know a better life than the public and the political. Sir Edward Grey, despite his statesmanlike success, always gives an impression that he would be happier to live the life of a country gentleman, to fish in his clear northern streams rather than in the muddy waters of politics, and to observe the habits of birds rather than of diplomatists.

A statesman so disinterested, who comes into public life from a sense of duty, is not likely to be turned from his principles by any self-regarding motive. Intrigue for office will be wholly foreign to him. The British people owe much to Sir Edward Grey, but his services at this crisis, when the strength of our Navy in the coming agony was being irrevocably determined, ought not to be forgotten. He stood immovably in Mr. McKenna's support, even to the point of threatening to resign also if the First Lord should be driven to lay down his office.

The struggle in the Cabinet seems to have been severe. Mr. Lloyd George's mind was set on the social reforms with which he desired, honourably enough, to signalize his term of office. He was intent on his Pensions and Insurance schemes, and on the democratic Budget he introduced this year. He had no intention that the money he was gathering amid fierce controversy from increased income and super-taxes, from death-duties, and the luxuries of the rich should be spent on engines of destruction built against “ nightmares ” that might never survive the “ stir and truth of day.” No doubt Mr. Lloyd George was himself in some degree the battle-ground of contending emotions. He was by no means insensible, as

THE DREADNOUGHT CONTROVERSY

we shall see in a moment, to the growing and specific antagonism between England and Germany, and its possible outcome. But for the present he was more intent on his duke-bating and his schemes of practical betterment than on our foreign relations. No human ribs could stand the beating of two emotions as strong as that which Mr. Lloyd George threw into his enterprises of social reform.

The controversies of those days have long been trodden into cold ashes. We need scarcely recall the incidents of the agitation. The Navy League sounded its hornpipes, and demanded eight ships a year. Popular meetings and patriots of the music-halls yelled "Eight." The word "eight," without further vocable, came almost to mean eight ships, and formed the catch in a song that ran through the whole country.

It is not surprising that the Liberal majority should be disappointed with Mr. McKenna who bore up even against the help of such profane auxiliaries. The deadlock was at last resolved by a compromise which recalls the old story told by President Lincoln: "I wished," he said, "to have the barn painted red. My wife wanted it blue. So we compromised and painted it red." Mr. McKenna in the end got eight ships for the year rather than the six he had asked and the four to which his opponents had endeavoured to reduce him. He was to lay down four certainly, but also another four if necessary—as Mr. McKenna took care that it should be.

Estimates on these lines were presented to the House of Commons on March 16th, 1909, and a debate followed which impressed England for a time with the possibilities involved in German naval policy, and the competition on many fronts between the two nations. But these moods were always very passing. The British people, or certainly the English race, are incapable of maintaining a steady spirit of antagonism towards a rival nation,

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however dangerous and aggressive. "Cheerfulness always sets in," or the nation passes lightly to other occupations. On this occasion the Lloyd-Georgian Budget and the heavy weather it encountered drove German rivalry and naval ambitions out of the public mind.

Mr. McKenna's speech in introducing the Estimates throws a good deal of light on the divided counsels of that time in the Liberal party :

"During the last few weeks (said Mr. McKenna) a number of friends of the Government have reminded me—anticipating, I suppose, the increase of the vote next year—that the policy of the present Government has been declared to be one of peace, retrenchment, and reform. (Cheers and laughter.) I agree most cordially with the policy, and I can well understand that any addition to the naval expenditure may be viewed with the greatest alarm by many persons whose political convictions I share, and whose good opinion I greatly value. . . . If I may speak of myself for a moment, it would be to say that there is no man in this House who is more earnestly desirous of retrenchment on armaments than I am, or more reluctant to have forced upon him, by the circumstances of the time, so burdensome a programme. My first experience of official life was at the Treasury. In that department I learnt the theory and the practice of economy. If I find myself in a situation which is above my pretensions I owe it to the fact that I am known to adhere to principles which I learnt in my first office. But there are occasions when even the most determined economist is willing to make a sacrifice. The safety of the Empire stands above all other considerations. No matter what the cost, the safety of the Empire must be assured."

MR. ASQUITH'S APPEAL

In the course of his speech Mr. McKenna intimated that all attempts to arrange with Germany a mutual reduction of armaments had been in vain. "I wish to make it perfectly plain," he added, "that there is no foundation for the two-fold assumption that is constantly put forward outside this House—firstly, that we are setting the pace in a race of shipbuilding competition as between the different countries of the world, whereas we are most anxious if we can to slacken the pace; and nextly, that we are animated in this matter by any unfriendly intentions of any sort or kind, direct or indirect, present or remote, to the friendly nation of Germany."

Mr. Asquith's speech was impressive. "I think honourable members on this side of the House," he said, "should pause twice or thrice before they refuse to the Government the power which we are asking the House to give us. There is no set of men here who are more anxious than we are to save money for the purposes of social reform, or to get rid of this horrible, devastating and sterilizing expenditure. But for the supreme and paramount interest of national security this is the least which we can demand from the House of Commons."

But the majority of Liberals remained unconvinced. The month following the presentation of the Estimates, Mr. Churchill, in a letter to Sir George Ritchie, his chairman at Dundee, again expressed views which to-day seem strangely out of character. He spoke of the German menace as "a false lying panic started in the party interests of the Conservatives," dwelt on our large preponderance in naval strength, and proceeded:

"I have left the most monstrous error to the last. It is this—that there is a profound antagonism of interests between the British and the German nations which can only be resolved by a supreme trial of strength towards which the tides of destiny

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are irresistibly bearing us. . . . No more abject repudiation, not only of the whole message of Liberalism but of the very structure of civilization, could be demanded of us. It is not true. There is no natural antagonism between the interests of the British and German peoples. . . . If a serious antagonism is gradually created between the two peoples, it will not be because of the workings of any natural or impersonal forces, but through the vicious activity of a comparatively small number of individuals in both countries, and the culpable credulity of a larger class." *

Mr. McKenna, having acted up to the full value of the "compromise," laid down eight Dreadnoughts (six belonged to Sir John Fisher's new pattern of super-Dreadnoughts), five in 1910, and five in 1911. That is, he achieved the eighteen which he had designed in his original programme presented to the Cabinet. Mr. Churchill soon succeeded Mr. McKenna at the Admiralty. It was he who brought a ready and sufficing British Navy into the long conflict in August, 1914. No man was better pleased than he that Mr. McKenna's eighteen ships were all there. There would have been a great, perhaps a decisive difference between the eighteen and the twelve or less to which Mr. McKenna's critics would have brought him down. No single man won the war, but in distributing the certificates let us not forget the courageous, prescient and self-sacrificing part played in 1909 by Mr. McKenna and Sir Edward Grey.

* Mr. Churchill, while maintaining that he and Mr. Lloyd George were right on the facts and figures, does the *amende honorable* on the broader issue. "Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer and I," he writes in the "World Crisis" (pp. 37-38), "were right in the narrow sense, we were absolutely wrong in relation to the deep tides of destiny. The greatest credit is due to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, for the resolute and courageous manner in which he fought his case and withstood his party on this occasion. Little did I think, as this dispute proceeded, that when the next Cabinet crisis about the Navy arose our rôles" (i.e. our offices) "would be reversed; and little did he think that the ships for which he contended so stoutly would eventually, when they arrived, be welcomed with open arms by me."

CHAPTER II

AGADIR AND AFTER

It has been observed by students of Mr. Lloyd George's career that from the year 1910 or thereabouts he showed signs of a change in his political temperament. The Duke-baiter, the demagogue and the concentrated social reformer fell into the background, and the statesman of broader and less specialized sympathies took their place. Mr. George was maturing under the many social and political influences that act upon a rising public man. He was passing, if I may so express it, from the tribunician to the senatorial frame of mind. He was destined to lose his taste for such apophthegms as that "a Duke was a more present danger than a Death's Head Hussar."

We may securely say that Mr. Lloyd George's mind even in the Limehouse days had never been shut to those considerations of national interest which underlie, or ought to underlie, all differences of party and class—to the questions of foreign affairs and of national and Imperial defence. It is interesting to find that in the year (1908) when he made the speech at the Queen's Hall in which he almost justified Germany in her armed preparation, and in which he fought against the increased naval estimates, he was not unaware of the meaning and menace of Anglo-German rivalry.

In the autumn of 1908 and between the two events just mentioned, Mr. Lloyd George went to Germany to obtain materials for his contemplated scheme of national insurance. The date is fixed in the present writer's memory because he accidentally crossed the Channel

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with Mr. Lloyd George. A conspicuous member of the British aristocracy happened to be also on board, but it is unnecessary to record the popular statesman's humorous comments. The passage through the French customs also evoked a little pleasantry at the expense of certain Tariff Reformers who were present. But a more important fact is that Mr. Lloyd George's chief travelling companion was Mr. Harold Spender, Mr. George's lively and appreciative biographer. In his book entitled the "Prime Minister" (p. 348), occurs a very illuminating incident which Mr. Spender relates in pictorial words :

"One evening in 1908, when we were sitting in the Orangerie at Stuttgart, in a pause of the German tour of that year, the conversation began to turn on the possibilities of a war between Britain and Germany. The parallel of Rome and Carthage came like a flash from Mr. Lloyd George ; it brought from him one of those far-reaching forecasts which, in other days, would have earned him the mantle of a prophet. 'There is the same commercial rivalry,' he said, 'the same sea-jealousy, the same abiding quarrel between the soldier and the merchant, the warrior and the shopkeeper, the civilization that has arrived and the civilization that is still struggling to arrive.' He paused, and then he added : 'I wonder if we shall be as unprepared as Carthage ; I wonder if we shall be as torn by faction ?'

"It is curious to look back now on that conversation, in that comfortable, well-lighted garden—the pride of that old German town—with the vault of stars above us, and the murmur of a great city around us."

It is indeed curious when we consider that a few months previously Mr. Lloyd George had made his memorable

A CRISIS

speech to the Peace Society, and soon after his return from Germany was to lead the opposition to Mr. McKenna's not extravagant shipbuilding programme. But we need not say that, therefore, Mr. Lloyd George was grossly inconsistent and wilfully indifferent to his country's essential interests. A man talks freely and fluently among his friends over the post-cenal coffee and cigars, and Mr. Lloyd George's historic parallel does not imply that in his view England had arrived at the stage of *delenda est Carthago*. Moreover, he does not seem to have recalled that certain wise critics of the classical times, such as the historian Sallust, dated the beginnings of the Roman decadence from the destruction of Rome's great rival by Scipio in 147 B.C.

I incline to think that it was the second Moroccan crisis that advanced Mr. Lloyd George from historic fantasies to a practical realization of the German danger. The first Moroccan episode had ended in a disappointing settlement for Germany. In the springtime of 1911 the controversy was suddenly reopened when France, in the exercise of that free hand in Morocco which England had conceded to her as a condition of the Anglo-French Entente, sent troops to Fez to quell a revolt in that city. This she did in the face of the German warnings that any such action would reopen the whole Morocco question.

But in fact the German Foreign Minister, Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, had been anxious for some time to get quit of the Morocco difficulty, which he believed could be solved by Germany meeting French desires in that country and receiving compensation in the African continent. But in the meantime, in accordance with the German policy, expressly disapproved though it had been by Prince Bismarck, of having a finger in every pie, he sent the gunboat *Panther* to Agadir, a port on the Atlantic coast of Morocco. The usual conventional reasons for this intrusion were given in a German dispatch sent to

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the signatories of the Act of Algeciras, none of whom perhaps was in any way deluded by it. It ran :

“ Some German firms established in the South of Morocco, notably at Agadir and in the vicinity, have been alarmed by a certain ferment among the local tribes, due, it seems, to recent occurrences in other parts of the country. These firms have applied to the Imperial Government for protection for their lives and property. At their request the Government have decided to send a warship to Agadir to lend help in case of need to their subjects and protégés as well as to the considerable German interests in that territory. As soon as the state of affairs has resumed its normal tranquillity the ship will leave.”

The British Government at once protested. “ You are violating the Act of Algeciras,” said Sir Arthur Nicholson, acting for the British Foreign Secretary, to Count Wolff-Metternich, the German Ambassador in London. The Ambassador replied that that Act was already dead. It soon became England’s rather than Germany’s need, to see that she was not left out of the Moroccan settlement. The one thing England would and could not permit was the establishment of Germany in a naval base on the Western Moroccan coast. Such a station would have threatened the flank of our original and most essential line of communications between the British islands, South Africa and India. We should have fought *toto corpore regni* rather than have permitted such a blow to our sea-power and Imperial security.

Negotiations were soon begun between Germany and France, but in a somewhat secretive way and with an apparent intention of excluding other parties. Our Government became anxious and suspicious. We could not know what was happening behind the council-chamber

NEGOTIATIONS OVER AGADIR

doors. Germany might be pitching her demands for an African *quid* in return for the Moroccan *quo* so high that France would not agree, and then Germany might fall back on the alternative policy of a partition of Morocco, which we, with our immense interests in the political status of that country, would never permit.

The *Panther* made her bound on to Morocco on July 1st. The two-Party negotiations began a week later. England was not invited, Kiderlen-Wächter explaining that a third party could not be admitted without calling in all the states signatory to the Act of Algeciras. Sir Edward Grey's requests for information seemed to be ignored. The German Press was during these weeks insisting on the cession to Germany of a portion of the Shereefian dominions. Morocco might thus be broken up *sub silentio*, and Britain faced with an accomplished fact.

"I therefore asked the German Ambassador to see me again on July 21st," Sir Edward Grey informed the House of Commons on November 27th. "I said to him, I wished it to be understood that our silence, in the absence of any communication from the German Government, must not be interpreted as meaning that we were not taking in the Moroccan question the interest which had been indicated by our statement of the 4th of that month. I had been made anxious by the news which appeared the day before as to the demands which the German Government had made on the French Government—demands which were in effect not a rectification of the frontier, but a cession of the French Congo, which it was obviously impossible for the French Government to concede. I heard that negotiations were still proceeding, and I still hoped that they might lead to a satisfactory result; but, it must be understood that, if they were unsuccessful, a very em-

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barrassing situation would arise. I pointed out that the Germans were in the closed port of Agadir ; that according to native rumours they were landing and negotiating with the tribes, so that, for all we knew, they might be acquiring concessions there, and that it might even be that the German flag had been hoisted at Agadir, which was the most suitable port on that coast for a naval base. The longer the Germans remained at Agadir the greater the risk of a state of affairs which would make it more difficult for them to withdraw and more necessary for us to take some steps to protect British interests. The German Ambassador was still not in a position to make any communication to me from the German Government."

The meeting between the Secretary of State and Ambassador was friendly enough, and the German Embassy sent a telegraphic report of it at once to Berlin. A reassuring message came back as promptly, but by that time the British Government had taken an important and decisive step, which would have been avoided if the "reassuring message had been awaited," or if the German Ambassador had given the desired information at the interview.

We will let Sir Edward Grey, as he was then titled, record what happened later on the day of the interview :

" In the course of that day, July 21st," the Foreign Secretary continued, " the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lloyd George) told me that he had to make a speech on an occasion of importance at the Mansion House the same evening. He consulted the Prime Minister and me as to what should be said. It was fourteen days since the last public statement had been made here (the House of Commons), and

MR. CHURCHILL'S TESTIMONY

that had been only the very short statement made by the Prime Minister in the House. We were anxious as to the way in which things were developing, and we all three felt that for a Cabinet Minister of first-rate importance to make a speech on a formal occasion and to say no word about Foreign Affairs after the interview would be misleading to public opinion here and everywhere."

It has been inferred, probably from this statement, that Mr. Lloyd George in making his pronouncement was simply acting as the involuntary and mechanical mouthpiece of the Government, that he was little more than a marionette operated by political artistes behind the scenes. This is not so, as is clearly revealed by a passage in Mr. Churchill's famous book. Writing about the Morocco crisis, he says :

" For some weeks he (Mr. Lloyd George) offered no indication of what his line would be, and in our numerous conversations he gave me the impression of being sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. But on the morning of July 21st, when I visited him before the Cabinet, I found a different man. His mind was made up. He saw quite clearly the course to take. He knew what to do, and how and when to do it. The tenor of his statement to me was that we were drifting into war. He dwelt on the oppressive silence of Germany so far as we were concerned. He pointed out that Germany was acting as if England did not count in the matter in any way ; that she had completely ignored our strong representation ; that she was proceeding to put the most severe pressure on France ; that a catastrophe might ensue ; and that if it was to be averted we must speak with great decision, and we must

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speak at once. He told me that he was to address the bankers at their annual dinner that evening, and that he intended to make it clear that if Germany meant war, she would find Britain against her. He showed me what he had prepared, and told me that he would show it to the Prime Minister and Sir Edward Grey after the Cabinet. What would they say? I said that of course they would be very much relieved; and so they were, and so was I."

This movement of the Radical Chancellor, if only for the occasion, towards the right or Liberal Imperialist end of the Liberal form was of the utmost value. It enabled the Government to speak with decision. It was a great advantage that the pronouncement should be made by Mr. Lloyd George. He was the most prominent spokesman in England of the pacific and disarmament policy. A public and official intimation *urbi et orbi* that England had no intention to step down from her high place among the nations of the world, and was not disposed to purchase peace at the price of national humiliation would come with far more effect from such a man than from an Imperialist and a Big Navy-ite. A Radical would be taken more seriously in such a warning than a Conservative. And in general a man who is slow to enter into a quarrel is likely to prove a more staying and formidable opponent when he gets into one than a man who will draw on another for no better reason than the cut of his beard.

Though the speech, as we have seen, was Mr. Lloyd George's own, he felt, no doubt, that he was appearing in a new character, and from this performance on the international stage we may perhaps date such a change in his political attitude as has been indicated. The hot passage in the Mansion House speech ran thus :

THE MANSION HOUSE SPEECH

"I am bound to say this—that I believe it is essential in the highest interests not merely of this country, but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and prestige amongst the great nations of the world. Her potent interest has been many a time in the past, and may yet be in the future, invaluable to the cause of human liberty. It has more than once in the past redeemed continental nations, who are sometimes apt to forget that service, from overwhelming disaster and even from international extinction. I would make great sacrifices to preserve peace; I conceive that nothing would justify a disturbance of international goodwill except questions of the gravest moment. But if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated, when her interests were vitally affected, as if she was of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure. National honour is no party question. The security of our great international trade is no party question. The peace of the world is much more likely to be secured if all nations realize fairly what the conditions of peace must be. And it is because I have the conviction that nations are beginning to understand each other better, to appreciate one another's point of view more thoroughly, to be ready to discuss calmly and dispassionately their differences, that I feel assured that nothing will happen between now and next year which will render it difficult for the Chancellor of the Exchequer in this place to respond to the toast proposed to you, my Lord Mayor, of the continued prosperity of the public peace."

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This speech caused trouble not only in Germany, but within the British Cabinet itself. In fact, the international weather on the top of it became "dirtier" than was realized by the nation. In Governmental circles there was even an alarm that the Germans might at once attack the British Fleet or at least demand Lloyd George's as they had Delcassé's resignation. (*See Churchill, the "World Crisis," pp. 47-48.*) Certain members of the Cabinet complained that such a declaration should have been made without all the members being consulted, and practically on the initiative of the Foreign Secretary. Sir Edward Grey seemed surprised at the sensation produced by the speech. He told the House of Commons on that same November 27th that what Mr. Lloyd George had said contained no menace. He had not said that there was any particular demand or claim on the part of Germany that was inconsistent with British interests. His purport simply was that where British interests were affected, we must not be treated as if we were of no account. "If the time ever comes when this cannot be said by a Minister in the position the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in then, we shall have ceased to exist as a great nation."

In Germany Mr. Lloyd George's warning was regarded as a piece of wanton interference by England in affairs that did not concern her. It showed once more that England was prepared to support any French ambitions while obstructing all attempts of Germany to extend her sphere of influence and colonization.

But interviews between the Foreign Minister and the German Ambassador had a pacifying effect. On July 26th the Foreign Minister was able to make a satisfactory statement to the House of Commons. He related how at the close of the interview the Ambassador expressed regret at the way in which British opinion had been misled to adverse conclusions as to German action. "I asked,"

SIR EDWARD GREY ON THE CRISIS

said Sir Edward Grey, "what else could have been expected, when the German Government suddenly sent a ship to Morocco, to a closed port, which was said to be the most suitable place on the west coast of Morocco for a naval base. Of course, this action had mobilized British public opinion. I also pointed out that, after I had made to him on July 4th a declaration on behalf of the British Government, we had had no communication from the German Government until July 24th, and even then their denial of any intention to establish a naval base had been in a form which I could not use to allay the suspicions which had been roused here . . . From that date onwards there were no further difficulties between the German Government and ourselves about the Moroccan negotiations."

As usual in these pre-war events it is hard to apportion responsibility. Our policy for once was definite enough. We were not going to have a German naval and submarine base threatening our main line of Empire communications. Germany may be excused for her hyperæsthesia on the Moroccan question, and her suspicion that France, by her sudden march upon the capital of that country, was intending to overpass what was permitted to her by the Treaty of Algeciras. But the habit which had been acquired by the German Emperor and Government of indulging in histrionic gestures, as when the Kaiser posed in shining armour at the side of Austria, when the latter pocketed Bosnia and Herzegovina three years previously, and as now when a gunboat was suddenly dispatched *in medias res*, had great disadvantages over the more ordinary methods of diplomacy.

Anyhow the clouds rolled by for the time being. The Congo Treaty was signed in November, by which Germany got compensation in another part of the African continent for what she was resigning in the North-West. But though the clouds had passed the air remained rather

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more than less charged with electricity. The Germans became still more sensitive about the "Einkreisung" or encirclement by hostile Powers, the fear of which was, in the German view, the cause and justification of the war.

One of the reactions of the Agadir crisis was Italy's purely aggressive attack on Tripoli. While France and Spain were helping themselves to Morocco, and Germany was obtaining a solatium elsewhere, Italy was not disposed to remain empty-handed. Her attack on the Turkish power in Tripoli had two important indirect effects. It strained the Triple Alliance, for Turkey was the friend and protégé of Germany, and Italy had not consulted her big Ally when she sent her troops to Africa. And, secondly, the result of the war so weakened Turkey that the Christian states were encouraged to fall upon her a year later, the Balkan wars took place, and these provided the spark which set all Europe ablaze.

So persistent was the *malaise* which followed the Agadir crisis in England and more acutely in Germany, that the German Emperor, at this time sincerely anxious for peace and amity between the two nations, suggested a personal exchange of views between the two cabinets in London and Berlin. Such a proposal was not premature at a time when the military party in the Reich was beginning to talk of a "preventive war" in order to forestall further preparations by Germany's prospective foes, and when a portion of the German press was speaking of a European war as sooner or later inevitable. Indeed, Admiral Tirpitz, always a danger and an un-friend to peace, was pressing hard for an increase in the German Navy, and had succeeded in his demand for a supplementary Naval Bill, which was to be incorporated in the Budget of 1912.

The Kaiser's message arrived in England at the beginning of 1912. The British Government at once re-

THE KAISER AT WINDSOR

sponded to it and Lord Haldane was deputed to represent the British Cabinet in the projected conversations. He had paid a visit to the German Emperor in 1906 when he attended a review of German troops in Berlin and discussed Anglo-German relations in the friendliest way with the Emperor and Prince von Bülow, then Chancellor. Again in 1907 when the Kaiser visited King Edward at Windsor Lord Haldane was in constant attendance.

The Kaiser was always what is known as "a good fellow." He owed his undoubted popularity among his own people to his autochthonous Teutonic character and his genial *bonhomie* displayed among the humblest classes of his subjects. He was truly representative of his people. His impulsive generosity, which blossomed wonderfully amid good cheer and good fellowship, came on this latter occasion very near settling the most important outstanding question between the two Powers. Mr. Haldane* tells the story thus:—

"The first evening of my visit there (i.e. Windsor Castle) just after his arrival in November, the Emperor took me aside and said he was sorry that there was a good deal of friction over the Bagdad Railway, and that he did not know what we wanted as a basis for co-operation. I said that I could not answer for the Foreign Office, but that, speaking as War Minister, one thing I knew we wanted was a 'gate' to protect India from troops coming down the new railway. He asked me what I meant by a 'gate,' and I said that meant the control of the section which would come near to the Persian Gulf. 'I will give you the gate,' replied the Emperor."

Lord Haldane took this impulsive offer quite seriously. A little later in the evening there was a theatrical per-

* "Before the War," p. 48.

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formance in the Castle, and the Minister for War asked the Kaiser, as the company broke up, whether he had really meant what he said, as, in that case, he (Lord Haldane) would go to London early and see Sir Edward Grey. "Next morning," writes Lord Haldane, "about 7.30 o'clock, a helmeted guardsman, one of those whom the Emperor had brought over with him from Berlin, knocked loudly at the door and came into my bedroom, and said that he had a message from the Emperor. It was that he did mean what he had said the night before."

So the Secretary of State got up and hurried to town. But in the end the Kaiser proved unable to deliver the goods. Emperors propose but their Ministers dispose. It was a pity, because an agreement over the Bagdad Railway at this time might have had a benign influence on the future course of events.

Lord Haldane was obviously the man for the mission to Germany. He spoke German with ease and in the course of his studies Germany had become, in his own phrase, his "spiritual home," an admission which amid the passion and the low thinking of the war-time was held by some an inexpressible offence. Lord Haldane was the most available statesman for the purposes of peace or war in our British politics. If any modern Delphi or Dodona had been specifically asked who was the wisest man in Britain, the answer would certainly have been Lord Haldane.

It is a difficult task even to estimate his immense and versatile ability. He was exceptionally endowed with the characteristic Scottish genius for metaphysics. Our English philosophic literature contains no profounder and more truly edifying works on the deepest problems of life and thought than his "Reign of Relativity," and "Philosophy of Humanism." This is not light reading for the window corner. Indeed Professor Stephen Leacock prescribed the former as a restorative for an almost hopeless

CHARACTER OF LORD HALDANE

case of hysteria caused by one of his own humorous lectures. Lord Haldane's philosophical works are not understandable without some effort and even preparation, and this is itself a refreshing quality in a rather frivolous and superficial age. But the lofty idealism, both moral and metaphysical, of Haldane's philosophy of life is full of stimulus and comfort to those who will open mind and heart to it. Lord Haldane's religious character is based, not upon the shifting sands of mood and emotion, but on unshakable foundations of reason and knowledge.

In a less scientific age Lord Haldane might have practised the arts of a Cabalist or a Rosicrucian. There seems to be a touch of Roger as well as of Francis Bacon in his constitution. He has told the world how he used to go down to the House of Commons with a walking-stick made entirely of cordite. One would scarcely be astonished if Lord Haldane were to discover the philosopher's stone or the elixir vitæ.

As a lawyer he has no rival in erudition and acumen, except perhaps Lord Birkenhead, who in other respects is scarcely comparable with the Liberal Lord Chancellor. Lord Haldane's famous speech on the Scottish Church question was a monumental feat of legal exposition and argument.

But Lord Haldane, who had also a genius for organization, will be remembered rather as Minister for War than as Lord Chancellor. He held that position for six years before the war, and we owe mainly to him that remodelling of our military forces whose soundness was proved in the crucial test of the great struggle.

Lord Haldane might be fully trusted to expound in Berlin the position and interests of Great Britain with the least possible provocation to German susceptibilities. His first interview was with Bethmann-Hollweg, the Imperial Chancellor, who was at that time strongly in favour of peace and friendship with England, and a

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counter-influence to the high-stepping and reckless Prussianism represented by Admiral von Tirpitz. What Lord Haldane said to the Chancellor is best set forth in his own words.

"I told him of certain dangers quite frankly, and he listened and replied with what seemed to me a full understanding of our position. I said that the increasing action of Germany in piling up magnificent armaments was, of course, within the unfettered rights of the German people. But the policy had an inevitable consequence in the drawing together of other nations in the interests of their own security. This was what was happening. I told him frankly that we had made naval and military preparations, but only such as defence required, and as would be considered in Germany matter of routine. I went on to observe that our faces were set against aggression by any nation, and I told him what seemed to relieve his mind, that we had no secret military treaties. But, I added, if France were attacked and an attempt made to occupy her territory, our neutrality must not be reckoned on by Germany. For one thing, it was obvious that our position as an island, protected by the sea, would be affected seriously if Germany had possession of the Channel ports on the northern shores of France. Again, we were under treaty obligation to come to the aid of Belgium in case of invasion, just as we were bound to defend Portugal and Japan in certain eventualities.* In the third place, owing to our dependence on freedom of sea-communications for food and raw materials, we could not sit still if Germany elected to develop her fleet to such an extent as to imperil our naval protection."†

* This statement may be questioned. See p. 63.

† Haldane, "Before the War," pp. 57-58.

THE TWO-POWER NAVY STANDARD

The Chancellor received this instruction in British essentials with good humour, but complained that "his Admirals and Generals were pretty difficult." The next day Lord Haldane took lunch with the Emperor and Empress at the Schloss, and after lunch had a long interview with the Kaiser and Admiral von Tirpitz in the Kaiser's cabinet room. Naval policy was again discussed. Lord Haldane made it clear that England would build two for any ships Germany laid down, and suggested that Germany should not force England into such competition. Tirpitz was insistent on the new German programme, and inclined to ask for some relaxation of the Two-Power standard.

It may be recalled in passing that that standard, which was the prevailing one at this time, was originally due to W. T. Stead. Writing about that great journalist after his death Fisher said: "He (Stead) was at Berlin. The High Personage said to him, 'Don't be frightened!' Stead replied to the All Highest, 'Oh, no! We won't! *For every Dreadnought you build we will build two!*' That was the genesis of the cry, 'Two keels to one.' I have a note of it made at the time for my *Reflections*." The standard, as we shall see, varied from time to time. On this occasion Lord Haldane held out no prospect of such a concession as Tirpitz desired.

The Kaiser, always in these days of a pacific intent, thought some agreement on the shipbuilding question might be reached, and suggested that a formula as a basis therefore should be arranged between the Chancellor and Haldane. The draft Naval Bill or *Novelle* was handed to Lord Haldane, who reserved it for future inspection. When that time came it turned out to involve much bigger increases than had been expected. There being no chance of modifying it, Mr. Churchill had to build against it, which he did with much energy.

The formula suggested by Bethmann-Hollweg as a

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basis for agreement when Lord Haldane met him on February 10th proved impracticable. Its third article ran thus :

If either of the High Contracting Parties become entangled in a war with one or more other Powers, the other of the High Contracting Parties will at least observe toward the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality and use its effort for the localization of the conflict.

Such an undertaking on England's part would have forbidden her to come to the help of France if Germany attacked her. Under the shelter of it Germany might have established herself in the Channel ports in easy view of the white cliffs of Albion.

Lord Haldane could hold out no prospect that Britain would sign her name to any such engagement. A new formula was then provisionally drafted by the two men under which each Power undertook not to make any unprovoked attack on the other or to join in any aggressive combination, naval or military, against the other.

Africa and the Bagdad railway were also talked over, and Lord Haldane's mission was complete. Lord Haldane during this visit noted a certain "swelled-headedness" epidemic in Germany. Like Jeshurun, the Germans had "waxen fat and grown thick." Like Jeshurun, they had become a nation rather "void of counsel" and indisposed to "consider their latter end." But there were better signs. The Germanic stock is sound and sensible at heart, and the Jingo phase was likely to pass, especially with the growth of the Social Democratic Party which gained new strength at the elections of 1912. The political doctrines summed up in the parlous word *Lloyd-Georgianismus* were gathering favour, and the Limehouse speech was read admiringly by many in the Fatherland.

There was no reason to despair of the future, but

LORD HALDANE'S CRITICS

Lord Haldane also brought back some grounds for uneasiness. It seemed certain, in the first place, that the supplementary shipbuilding programme would be proceeded with, and that meant an intensifying of the competition and of the sense of antagonism between the two peoples. There was also the possibility that the level-headed and peace-loving Bethmann-Hollweg might be replaced by the wild and whiskered warrior, von Tirpitz.

But if there was material for anxiety, there was also ground for hope. This must be remembered in connexion with the campaign against Lord Haldane prompted in the early days of the war by the war spirit on its lowest levels. It was loudly complained of the British missionary that he had seen the inevitableness of war during his visit to Berlin at the beginning of 1912, and had failed properly to warn public opinion at home or to make the appropriate preparations.

It was also remembered that Lord Haldane, as already remarked, had spoken of Germany as his "spiritual home," and this was unpardonable and incomprehensible in the eyes of many who may never have read a word of Kant or Goethe, and whose appreciation of the music of Bach and Beethoven was perhaps equally defective. This persecution of a wise and patriotic statesman, whose integrity has never been doubted or questioned, might have been looked upon and passed by, if it had not succeeded in depriving the nation of the service, at least in a responsible office, of the ablest and most resourceful brain at its disposal at the most fateful hour in its destiny.

What these critics desired of Lord Haldane was that on his return to England he should have raised the fiery cross, declared that war was imminent and inevitable, and insisted on an immediate measure of conscription. The wickedness and absurdity of such a course are obvious. Lord Haldane in the guise of Peter the Hermit would not have been believed in this country, and he would

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certainly not have got his conscription. But he would have succeeded in precipitating the war, which in truth was not inevitable at that date and which there was a hopeful prospect of averting. Down to the middle of 1913 that reasonable hope existed, and it would have been reckless and inhuman to act on the assumption that it did not exist.

So far as Lord Haldane was personally concerned, his special responsibility ended with the report he made to the Foreign Office. In the summer of 1912 he became Lord Chancellor, an office which absorbed all his energies, and gave him no opportunity of mingling directly in foreign affairs. But the policy adopted or rather continued by the Liberal Government, and perfectly approved by Lord Haldane, cannot be impugned in respect of wisdom and humanity. It had two "motifs." The first was to seek peace and ensue it by every practicable means, to co-operate with all influences in favour of peace. The second was to prepare for war, in case the first object was not attained and war broke out. On the one hand no help or encouragement was to be given to that small British minority which was bent upon provoking war, and on the other those extremists were to have no countenance who were wilfully blind to the darker symptoms of the times and would strip England of her panoply on the fatuous assumption that our brother-German would never fight.

This policy in both its aspects was loyally followed. Sir Edward Grey fought for peace persistently, and without loss of national respect, to the very vigil of the war. The negotiations that followed immediately on Lord Haldane's return were not, it is true, successful. Sir Edward Grey endeavoured to substitute for the impossible neutrality formula the following :

"The two Powers being mutually desirous of

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securing peace and friendship between them, England declares that she will neither make nor join in any unprovoked attack upon Germany. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject, and forms no part of any treaty, understanding, or combination to which England is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object."

But such an agreement was regarded as insufficient by the German Government and was in the end not concluded.

Speaking at Cardiff, October 2nd, 1914, after the outbreak of the war, Mr. Asquith alluded to these negotiations, saying clearly what happened :

" In the year 1912 we laid down, in terms carefully approved by the Cabinet, and which I will textually quote, what our relations with Germany ought to be. We said, and we communicated this to the German Government, ' Britain declares that she will neither make nor join in any unprovoked attack upon Germany. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject, and forms no part of any treaty, understanding, or combination to which Britain is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object.'

" But that was not enough for German statesmanship. They wanted us to go further. They asked us to pledge ourselves absolutely to neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in war, at a time when Germany was enormously increasing both her aggressive and defensive resources, especially upon the sea.

" They asked us for a free hand, so far as we were concerned, if and when they selected the opportunity, to dominate the European world. To such a demand

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but one answer was possible, and that was the answer we gave."

The efforts at a naval understanding also came to nothing. The German *Novelle* or Naval Supplementary Bill was found on examination to be a much bigger business than had been imagined. On July 20th, 1912, Mr. Churchill announced the nature of his reply to this new challenge. A supplementary money estimate of nearly a million sterling was asked. There was to be a further concentration of our navy in the North Sea. The full-commissioned battleships in home seas were to be raised from sixteen to twenty-four by withdrawing the Atlantic Fleet from Gibraltar and other vessels from Malta.

Mr. Churchill's speech and his revelation of the new German programme made a great impression in Parliament, and to some extent in the country. But the British Government, while it took the necessary measures of defence, maintained its attitude of friendliness towards Germany. "We cultivate with great and growing cordiality our special friendships," said Mr. Asquith three days after the naval debate in the House; "but they are in no sense exclusive. Our relations with the great German Empire are at this moment—and I feel sure are likely to remain—relations of amity and goodwill."

But the stream of time rolled steadily onwards to the fated Day. The new relative dispositions of the British and French Fleets, under which the former was concentrated in the Channel and the North Sea while the French battle-fleet was withdrawn to the Mediterranean, assumed that England would defend the French Atlantic ports in case of need. It was on that assumption that France withdrew her ships to the Mediterranean. "We could not abandon the safeguarding of the Channel and our Atlantic coasts," writes M. Poincaré,* "without

* "Les Origines de la Guerre," pp. 79-81.

UNDERSTANDING WITH FRANCE

being assured that in case of danger discussions would take place (between England and France) on the attitude, and if necessary the practical measures, to be taken." He points out that even if an unjustifiable attack had been made, the British Government had entered into no engagement with France.

It became necessary, therefore, to define the Entente a little more closely. Hence the famous letters which passed between Sir Edward Grey and M. Paul Cambon.

"From time to time in recent years," wrote the Foreign Secretary, "the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not, to be regarded as an engagement that commits either government to action in a contingency that has not yet arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British Fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war. You have, however, pointed out that, if either government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other. I agree that, if either government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common."

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This careful and cautious statement which M. Cambon corroborated by a letter written in the same terms seemed to leave the British Government uncommitted to armed intervention on the Continent. But in spirit, though not in the letter, it committed England to come to the help of France if attacked by the only possible enemy. And France, in turn, was closely allied with Russia and bound to help her. The Anglo-Russian Entente, which existed and was to grow more "cordial," had not been defined between the two countries. But a German attack on Russia would bring in France and would in turn bring in Great Britain. There was some truth in Lord Loreburn's remark that "in effect the new formula left the peace of Great Britain at the mercy of the Russian Court," though it must be remembered that England had always the right to consider who was the aggressor. Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey, however, continued to maintain that the hands of England were free, and that the Entente had no point directed against Germany. The Liberal Government, indeed, was destined to excite French anxiety and suspicion by the earnestness with which it pursued its amicable intentions towards the German Empire.

CHAPTER III

NEARING THE CATARACT

THE history of Mr. Lloyd George's opinions during the two years preceding the war has caused his biographers some perplexity. The "Lloyd George of Agadir," to quote Mr. Churchill's expression, was a different person from the Lloyd George as he had hitherto been known, and those critics are justified who have pointed to a modification after that crisis of Mr. Lloyd George's crusading fervours. It is true the Chancellor of the Exchequer threw himself into his agrarian campaign with his old fighting vigour. But even on the Welsh Disestablishment Bill he showed a willingness to come to terms with the enemy which was scarcely characteristic of his former self, and in the burning controversies over Irish Home Rule and the position of Ulster he took no very conspicuous part.

But on the peace and armament question he would seem to have descended from the heights of the Mansion House speech, and to have become once more the Radical pacifist of his earlier days. Mr. Churchill's conversion, if we may so speak, was more thorough and permanent. He had been hand and glove with Mr. Lloyd George in resistance to the McKenna navy estimate, but after Agadir he moved to the right of the Liberal bench with a very determined gesture. The year 1912 saw important official changes. The Welsh Disestablishment Bill was coming forward, and the Secretary of State for the Home Office would naturally be responsible for it. Mr. Churchill's tradition was military rather than ecclesiastical. Mr. McKenna, on the other hand, was a Welsh member and had a special interest in the measure.

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An exchange of offices between these two was obviously desirable, and this was effected in the autumn of 1911. "Mr. McKenna and I," writes Mr. Churchill in his lively manner, "changed guard with strict punctilio. In the morning he came over to the Home Office, and I introduced him to the officials there. In the afternoon I went over to the Admiralty; he presented his board and principal officers and departmental heads to me, and then took his leave. I knew he felt greatly his change of office, but no one would have divined it from his manner."*

Mr. Churchill took over not only Mr. McKenna's office but the entire spirit and policy of his administration. From the moment he entered the Admiralty down to the beginning of the war he never faltered in his schemes of naval development and his preparation for the worst that might happen between England and Germany. In the teeth of opponents in his own party who fought persistently against every new ship, he carried all his programmes, the last in 1914 bringing up our navy estimates to 52½ millions sterling, a sum calculated to enrage the Radical enthusiasts for military and naval retrenchment.

This is not the place to detail Mr. Churchill's administration at the Admiralty. He has done himself justice in the brilliant book he has published. One of his most valuable innovations was the creation of a naval war staff for the study of modern sea war in conjunction with the land forces. Mr. Churchill, it is true, varied this drastic policy of development with the suggestion in 1912 of a Naval Holiday, which was not accepted by Germany, though, as Mr. Churchill remarks, it has since been adopted in principle by the English-speaking peoples of the world. The result of Mr. Churchill's driving activity during these years was that the British Navy was abundantly and superbly ready when the great call was heard.

Meanwhile, during the seven or eight years before

* "The World Crisis," p. 70.

ARMY ORGANIZATION IN 1914

the war, and for the most part under Lord Haldane's administration, the Army had been remodelled. Expeditionary Force, Special Reserve, Territorial Force, had been perfectly organized. Down to 1907 the peace organization of the Army was totally different from that which was necessary in war. It was found in 1906 that it would have taken a full two months to place only 80,000 men on to a continental field of war. In 1914 we had an expeditionary force, equipped to the last button, of 160,000 men who could be thrown on to the Continent, if necessary, in twelve days. And in the territorial army we had a framework capable of holding the biggest citizen militia that we were ever likely to enrol.

Those who are still inclined to ask why we had not an army on a continental scale of 2,000,000 men ready to fight in 1914 may be referred to the very conclusive answer furnished by Lord Haldane.* We should simply have weakened ourselves in the attempt to be a great military as well as a great naval power. The highest military opinion at home and abroad had stressed the advantages of a moderate, highly efficient force for the purposes of the most modern warfare. This prescription we fully dispensed. Our regular army served magnificently in the early mobile stages of the war, and thus helped decisively to determine its final issue. The Germans themselves had not anticipated a long trench campaign and were not prepared for it. There can be no question that, so far as the specific naval and military requirements, laid down by the highest authorities, were concerned, we stood ready in August, 1914. Yet, as we shall see, our views on military equipment were in many respects ill-advised, and had to be reconsidered in the face of the enemy.

We were armed for defence and not aggression. If we had long intended the war, as our enemies asserted,

* See "Before the War," Chap. iv.

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we should have attempted much more, though it is questionable whether we should have succeeded. Socially and industrially our peace organization was unaffected, whereas France and Germany, with their systems of conscription, were fully organized for war. Mr. Lloyd George might truthfully say in Manchester, June 3rd, 1915 :

“ We were the worst organized nation in the world for this war. I am not altogether sorry for that. That fact will be our apology and defence in history when this comes to be judged. I would rather that we suffered somewhat than that we should have the stain on our conscience of having had anything to do with precipitating this horrid war. When we appear at the great judgment seat of history as a nation and as a people, and this war, with its terrors, with its tortures, with its suffering, is brought up against us, we can say the proof that we are innocent of this crime is that we did not prepare ; that we at any rate did not organize for that war. We had not gathered together great forces for the purpose of conquering Germany or Austria, or trampling upon the liberties of any other nation. But, undoubtedly, the exculpatory fact left us the worst-organized nation in the world. We are a very individualistic nation, which means that we all want to have our own way. Individualism has its merits in producing strong, independent, virile nations, but in war individualism has its defects.”

Mr. Lloyd George did not in 1911 move to the right with his colleague and associate, Mr. Churchill. “ I have shown,” writes Mr. Churchill, “ how forward the Chancellor of the Exchequer was during the crisis of Agadir in every matter that could add to the strength of the British attitude. But as soon as the danger was passed

MR. CHURCHILL AND MR. LLOYD GEORGE

he adopted a different demeanour. He felt that an effort should be made to heal any smart from which Germany might be suffering, and to arrive at a common understanding on naval strength." The two Ministers, however, worked together for a time, and it was largely through their efforts that Lord Haldane was sent to Berlin. But they gradually drew apart, and Mr. Churchill was destined to have Mr. George as his leading critic and opponent in his struggle for naval development.

There was nothing unnatural in this antagonism. It would be difficult to imagine two men more dissimilar in antecedents than the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the new First Lord of the Admiralty. Mr. Churchill was an aristocrat, a sportsman, and a soldier. When he became a Liberal he found himself in some unfamiliar company. He was at first rather maladroit in his contacts with the Nonconformist conscience. On one occasion when he arrived in Manchester for an election campaign he expressed a kindly hope to an eminent Nonconformist member on his committee that that gentleman had not been badly hit by the unexpected issue of a horse-race that had been run the same day. At an age when Mr. Lloyd George was attending anniversary sermons, and qualifying for an attorney's practice in a small Welsh town, Mr. Churchill, as a lieutenant in the 21st Lancers, was taking part in the famous and gallant charge through the Arab ambushade on the field of Omdurman. Certainly Mr. Churchill's natural position, if he was to sit on the Liberal bench at all, was on its extreme right edge.

Mr. Lloyd George, on the other hand, was born and cradled and nurtured in Radical Nonconformity, with all its implications. He belonged to a class which sent very few of its members into the armed forces of the Crown and regarded the profession of a soldier as little less profane than that of an actor. As regards the turf, it is certain that the Nonconformists of Portmadoc and

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Llanystumdwy were not largely represented at such events as the Derby or the Grand National. Mr. Lloyd George expended some of his most withering satire on aristocratic sport. His celebrated speech at Bedford in 1913 about gamekeepers and pheasants and mangel-wurzels exposed him to a suspicion that his knowledge of rural sports was rather academic than empirical.

With his Liberal and Nonconformist nurture Mr. Lloyd George had imbibed that hatred of militarism, that suspicion of Imperial sentiment, that dislike of ultra-nationalism at home which was strangely coupled with a fervent championship of all nascent and struggling nationalisms abroad, and in general with that strong cosmopolitan and international bias which has always marked the Liberalism of the main stream. We shall see how nothing but a wanton attack on a small nation sufficed in the end to break down Mr. George's opposition to the great war.

In considering Mr. George's doings and sayings during the two years before the war we have always to remember his bringing-up and its powerful operation upon him through all changes of time and circumstance. Mr. Lloyd George throughout his entire course has embodied the spirit of Liberalism in our politics as few other statesmen in our national history.

Also it must be remembered that Mr. Lloyd George in these days was not directly concerned with foreign policy and armed forces, but only with the paying for them. He was the watch-dog of the Treasury, and as such was *ex officio* not likely to have much admiration for war-alarums whose credentials were not beyond question.

But above all we must bear in mind that in the years 1912-1914 there was still a fair prospect that the war-cloud would disperse without breaking in tempest and destruction, and that the war for which we were preparing and which some noisy people seemed determined to provoke

COUNT METTERNICH

might never arrive at all. Most people who recall those days will admit that this was the feeling of the majority not only of the Liberal party but of the country at large. The nation steadily refused to dance to the war-pibrochs of Mr. Maxse and his fellow-pipers.

But, somebody remarks, was not all this very fatuous and short-sighted? Was it not the duty of every patriotic and responsible statesman in those days to assume and prepare for the worst, to build and recruit at all costs, and to cultivate among all classes of the people what Cicero calls the *animus armatus*, a disposition of hostility towards the great rival power? These questions savour of that inexpensive sort of wisdom which is subsequent to the event. True wisdom in the years before the war, as already remarked, had two motives and two aspects. It was not the whole of wisdom to prepare men and material as for an inevitable conflict, but only a part of it. It was not the whole of wisdom to discourage hostility and to co-operate with all the forces making for peace, but also only one part of it. There were extremists who concentrated on either one or the other of these motives.

The truly wise man was he who combined the two in right proportion, and Mr. Lloyd George must be judged by that test. There is plenty of evidence apart from the Agadir incident that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not a peace-at-any-price fanatic. Mr. Churchill gives an account of a conversation he had after the Agadir crisis when dining with Count Metternich, then German Ambassador in England. The Anglo-German problem was discussed in its naval and other bearings over a bottle of famous hock from the Kaiser's cellars. Mr. Churchill deprecated, as strongly as courtesy allowed, the German navy increases which simply compelled a two-fold British response. "I learned afterwards," he writes, "that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in similar circumstances had

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spoken more explicitly, saying that he would raise a hundred millions in a single year for the British Navy, if its supremacy were really challenged."

How far such an assurance was consistent with Mr. Lloyd George's subsequent counter-pull to Mr. Churchill's naval proposals and whether Mr. Lloyd George lost the true balance in those decisive years, and leaned unduly on the side of faith, hope and charity, must be left to the reader's judgment.

It is a curious fact that our relations with Germany steadily improved during the two years previous to the war. They seemed to improve in proportion as the general prospects of the world's peace declined. In October, 1912, the Balkan Christian states, who had formed a sort of federation among themselves, declared war on Turkey. They conceived that after the Tripolitan war, the internal disorder following on the Revolution, and the amputation by Austrian surgery of the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the "sick man" was even sicker than usual, and they judged the occasion meet for a new war of liberation.

Turkey was knocked out in a first short round. The Greeks and Servians quickly overran the Turkish territory in Thrace and Macedonia, while the Bulgarians, having fought and routed the Turkish forces in pitched battles, pursued them to their last ditch in the lines of Tchataldja that defended Constantinople. But Adrianople had been left behind and still held out. So the Servians sent a force and that city was also captured.

Then a strange thing, very Balkanic in character, took place. The distribution of the territory to be rescued from the Ottoman heel had been arranged before the war, but now, on an insufficient plea, Greece and Servia went back on this undertaking. Bulgaria, who had borne the lion's share of the fighting against the Turk, was left with the lamb's share of the profits.

THE BALKAN WARS

Bulgaria, naturally vexed, acted with decision. She fell on Greeks and Serbs, her dear comrades-in-arms of yesterday, and was beaten as decisively as she had herself beaten Turkey. And upon her, while in this plight, fell her neighbour Roumania, who had been a sleeping partner in the war, and whose military strength was, therefore, intact. To complete the Bulgarian débâcle, the Turks issued from their lines and once more recovered Adrianople. Bulgaria, shorn by Roumania of her own province of the Dobroudja and having profited in no other respect from her victories over the Crescent, was left sore and sullen, and she remembered these things when her stand-by was wooed by the two parties to the great war.

The Great Powers watched this sensational film unfold itself in the "super-cinema" of the Balkans with surprise and anxiety. At the end of both acts the spectators intervened. After the first war a conference was held in London, and a Treaty arranged. By this latter Serbia was deprived, under Austrian pressure, of her newly acquired postern on the Adriatic at Durazzo. Britain, indeed, rather leaned to the support of the Austrian interest. Turkey lost a certain amount of her European territory, and the whole business seemed nicely settled when the second war broke out, and the London Treaty fell to the ground before it was ratified.

After the second war the Powers arranged the Treaty of Bucharest, which swarmed with the larvæ of future trouble. Austria regarded with much dislike the aggrandizement of Serbia and the depression of her own friend Bulgaria. The second Balkan War had indeed upset all her interest and calculation. The increased prestige of Serbia could not fail to react on her own Slav subjects, not only in Austria proper but in those Slav states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, with the encouragement of the Kaiser's "shining armour," she had annexed from

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the Turk four or five years before. Moreover, Austria's ambition of an outlet on the Ægean looked more hopeless than ever.

Germany saw her "corridor," the channel of her *Drang nach Osten* and her Berlin-Bagdad enterprise, blocked by the new power of Servia. Italy was super-sensitive about Servian designs on Albania and the Adriatic. The *malaise* resulting in some quarters from the new settlement was, indeed, so painful that, almost on the day when the Bucharest Treaty was signed, Austria proposed to Italy to attack Servia. Italy declined, and in any case Germany would have forbidden such an anticipation of her gradually maturing project of challenging the general scheme of things.

No possible premium could have insured peace in the Near East under such conditions. Russia was vitally interested in the Pan-Slav movement represented by Servia. To Austria it was the one great danger threatening the integrity and existence of her ill-balanced Empire. The interests of these two great Powers in the Balkan Peninsula were opposing forces which might clash violently at the least misadventure or indiscretion, and their quarrel would at once bring into the arena the might of the two other great military Powers of Europe, probably the world-Empire of the British and even the vast Republic of the West. Thus the whole civilized world might be embroiled by a casual event in a far corner of the European continent.

"It was a reflection of the first of political philosophers,"* wrote Sir Edward Cook,† "that disturbances in States, though they may arise on trifling occasions, do not involve trifling issues. The immediate cause of a war may seem altogether disproportionate alike to the sacrifices and to its results; its outbreak may be

* See Aristotle—"Politics," viii. 4.

† "Rights and Wrongs of the Transvaal War," p. 1.

IMPAIRED RELATIONS WITH GERMANY

traced to a caprice, a hasty word, a clumsy phrase. But the question remains how the nations involved in the war came to place their destinies at the mercy of such trifles. The answer is that the fundamental issues are seldom other than important. It is with political as with national convulsions. The immediate occasion of them may be a step, a drop, a crack ; the ultimate cause is to be found in the long process of permanent factors, or the slow emergence of subterranean forces." These words were written long before the outbreak of the great European War. But they apply exactly to that event and the causes of it. The upland snows had gradually accumulated. The avalanche was prepared, and it seemed that a pistol-shot or even a sudden shout might bring it down.

But our point here is that our relations with Germany continued to improve and to give Mr. Lloyd George and Liberals of his way of thinking some justification for a new anti-military campaign. Throughout the Balkan negotiations the British and German Governments acted in a friendly and harmonious spirit.

Indeed, Sir Edward Grey laboured with much success to compose all the outstanding questions at issue between the two countries. In Africa an agreement was reached without great difficulty, though at the price of substantial concessions on the British side. The celebrated agreement of 1898 was brought up for revision. Britain undertook not to oppose the purchase by Germany of the Portuguese African colonies, Angola, Northern Mozambique, San Thomé, Príncipe, as soon as Portugal might be willing to sell. Meanwhile these big territories were to be regarded as legitimate German spheres of influence.

Strange to tell, though the agreement was so readily reached, a hitch occurred over the signature of the African Treaty, and, as a matter of fact, it remained unsigned when the war broke out.

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The Mesopotamian agreements with Turkey and Germany proceeded just as happily. We need not dwell on the details of the proposed settlement with Germany. Its main provisions were that Germany should be allowed to build the Bagdad line as far as Basra, and that the country through which the railway passed should be open to Germany's peaceful penetration. Here, too, the British Government was willing to concede much for the sake of removing all possible causes of trouble and strife between England and Germany. But this Treaty also remained uncompleted when the war broke out and nullified all these well-meant efforts in favour of peace.

So persistent and successful were the negotiations between Britain and her chief rival, that our French friends began at last to grow a little jealous. So much so, indeed, that M. Poincaré found it desirable to obtain further assurances from Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey that the old love was not off. With the approval of the British statesmen he read to the French Chamber at the end of 1912 the following statement :

Since certain doubts have arisen in the public opinion of France as to the present orientation of British policy, Sir Edward Grey has informed the French Ambassador that nothing in British policy is altered, that no new relations with other Powers have been entered into, and that the close Entente with France exists in its full extent.

M. Poincaré seems to have been quite fully assured of England's constancy only when as French President, in June, 1913, he visited London, where he received a very cordial welcome.

This improvement in the Anglo-German arrangements suggested to the section of the Liberal party which is usually called pacifist or anti-Imperial a renewed campaign

DEMAND FOR REDUCTION OF ARMAMENTS

for reducing the naval and military estimates. Mr. Lloyd George was again the chief spokesman of this movement. The naval estimates especially had risen steadily. If this continued, the financing of social reforms and the reduction of indirect taxation would be impossible. The time had now come for crying halt. Official assurances had been given that England was under no treaty obligation to intervene in a continental struggle. This was true in the letter rather than in the spirit. As Mr. Lloyd George admitted in a speech long afterwards in the House of Commons (August 7th, 1918), if there was no "compact" there was an obligation of honour to go to the help of France.

But in the year 1913 Liberal statesmen one after another assured their anxious followers that England was under no treaty to fight on the continent of Europe, that relations with Germany were excellent, and that war was a very remote if not impossible contingency. Lord Haldane himself made a speech on January 15, 1913, on his return from America, in which he said that there was "a far greater prospect of peace (with Germany) than there ever was before."

Doubts began to be thrown on the legitimacy of all recent war panics, including that of Agadir. Resolutions were passed at Liberal Federation meetings strongly demanding a reduction in armaments, and even commending the doctrine known as the "freedom of the sea," that is, the abolition of the right of capturing private property at sea during war-times. Mr. Lloyd George, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and as social reformer, joined heart and soul in this agitation, which, as already remarked, was not unjustified by the prevailing and prospective state of the international weather. I have before me Mr. Lloyd George's speech on the occasion of his annual Budget statement on April 22nd, 1913. One passage will serve to illustrate the feelings of the most

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numerous section of the Liberal party in those days. We may imagine with what approval the Chancellor's words were read at many provincial breakfast-tables the next morning. Mr. Lloyd George said :

“ I looked up the expenditure of this country fifty years ago. I think it was rather a good period to take ; in many respects the conditions were analogous. They are both years that came after the close of a great war in which we were engaged. We were then after the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny—wars in which in many respects the military equipment had been found wanting in almost every essential condition except the gallantry and endurance of our soldiers. In both cases there was created a demand for increased expenditure ; there were the same great passions thrilling the nation ; there were the same panics and nightmares. (Radical cheers.) Then the French Empire was the bugbear. The third great panic prophesied by Mr. Cobden had taken place. We had a distinguished soldier, a distinguished fighting man, taking the lead in working up the excitement and nervous apprehension—Sir Charles Napier. He was firmly convinced that there would be an invasion of this country. He described the march upon London, and he said in this House : ‘ When it comes, what will become of the funds, God only knows ! ’ He even fixed the date of the invasion. (Laughter.)

“ Enormous sums of money were spent in useless fortifications—(Labour cheers)—and in twelve years the naval and military expenditure of this country doubled. There were the same calculations in comparison between fleets. We were told in every motion in this House, and there were several debates in the House of Lords, that the French Fleet was

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superior in big ships and big guns. There were the same stories of secret preparations. We were told that the French were preparing huge transports for the purpose of landing troops, and we were assured it would be the easiest thing in the world to land 80,000 men on the South Coast to march on London. It is a very interesting story, and worth studying now. We know now that the French Emperor not merely had no designs on us, but that he was exceedingly anxious to be friendly with this country, that it was the one desire of his life to be on good terms with Great Britain and her Sovereign. True, there were a few irascible French colonels, but we also know now for a certainty that at no time had they the remotest chance of landing any troops in this country, and that our Fleet was overwhelmingly superior. At any rate it had the effect of driving up expenditure. . . . Since I have had the privilege of occupying my present office, expenditure on armaments has grown by £15,000,000, and I see no prospect of this very menacing growth coming to an end unless there is some fundamental change in the attitude and policy of the nations of the earth."

The observer of these events feels some surprise that the Navy estimates, backed by the "Liberal Imperialist" section of the Cabinet, continued to be accepted. The explanation is obvious. The Imperialist or Big-Navy section of the Liberal party could rely at all times and with perfect confidence on the support of the Conservative opposition. This was a bigger combination than the force composed of Liberal "Little Navyites" and the entire posse of the Labour members.

We can well imagine that the relations between the two "tabernacles" in the Liberal party were not cordial. Nor was Mr. Winston Churchill likely to make any great

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efforts to alleviate this state of things. The speech he made at the Lord Mayor's Banquet in November, 1913, when responding to the toast of the Navy, was, indeed, nicely calculated in substance and expression to enrage a militant pacifist. It was delivered, evidently with some enjoyment, right in the middle of the anti-armament crusade :

" We meet here to-night," said Mr. Churchill, " in circumstances more free from any danger to European peace than was the case on either of the two other occasions when I have had the honour at your banquet to respond to this toast. We meet here to-night with a greater development of naval force and power, actual and relative, than was the case on either of those two occasions. But you must not suppose that any relaxation of our efforts is possible at present. Nor must we expect that the burden which we bear, which would be crushing for any other country but ours, is likely to be diminished in the immediate future. The measured and unbroken development of the German Navy, the simultaneous building by many Powers, great and small, all over the world, of modern and large modern ships of war will undoubtedly require from us expenditure and exertions greater than those we have ever made in time of peace, and next year it will be my duty, if I should be responsible for this important Department of State, to present to Parliament estimates greater than the enormous sum originally voted in the present year. His Majesty's Government will embrace and will work for every opportunity of abating the competition in naval and military armaments which is the bane and the reproach of modern Europe. But what is necessary has got to be done, and we shall not hesitate for a moment, once we are satisfied of the need, to go to Parliament boldly for

A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE, 1914

those supplies of men and money which the House of Commons, whatever its party complexion, has never refused in living memory for the vital services of the State."

The year 1914 opened not unfavourably for the prospects of peace. Few of those who watched the New Year in on December 31st, 1913, can have foreknown that the bells which were pealing in the depths of that long winter night were ringing out the old and ringing in the new in a more secular and tragic sense than the words had ever yet borne. For hundreds of thousands of those who were wishing one another a Happy New Year the new year was to be the beginning of unimaginable sorrow and sacrifice. The year that then dawned was indeed to be an *annus calamitosus*. That phrase was specially applied to the year 166 of our era, but 1914 had a much better claim to the title.

No ill omens or ill forebodings are recorded, yet there must have been some behind the political scenes who could scarcely look ahead and cry "All's well." But the eyes of the vast majority of the nation were holden so that no prevision of the terrors in the pathway ahead darkened that festive season. The readers of the *Daily Chronicle* were greeted on New Year's Day with a message from Mr. Lloyd George, in the form of an interview, which held the place of honour on the front page. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was spending his Christmas at Criccieth, and it was there he had this conversation with the Press representative.

It is significant that the Chancellor dealt first and foremost with the question of war and armaments. He recalled how Lord Randolph Churchill had resigned in 1887 rather than assent to the proposed estimates for the Army and the Navy. If the expenditure of this country upon armaments had remained even at a figure

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which Lord Randolph had regarded as bloated and profligate, a saving would have been effected equivalent to four shillings in the pound in the local rates. Looked at from another point of view, the duties on tea, sugar, coffee and cocoa could have been swept away, and the income tax reduced to twopence in the pound.

Here we discern one aspect of a Liberal statesman's dislike of expenditure on armaments. The Liberal party, and Mr. Lloyd George in particular, were committed to a policy of social reform. That was the object and the condition of their political existence. But social reform costs money, and money was not available with the ever-growing expenditure on weapons. There was much natural indignation in Liberal circles that even Mr. Lloyd George's hardly achieved Budget of 1909 had proved an "armour-plated" one, and the proceeds gone largely in ships and guns. Mr. John Buchan detects in this motive for peace and retrenchment the "ugly trail of party spirit." Still, it was a very natural motive in a responsible Liberal statesman.

Proceeding with his conversation, Mr. Lloyd George thought it the most favourable moment for twenty years to overhaul our expenditure on armaments—this for three reasons. First, he said, "our relations with Germany are infinitely more friendly than they have been for years. The strain, owing largely to the wise and patient diplomacy of Sir Edward Grey, is completely relaxed. . . . The Agadir incident served a very useful purpose in bringing home to these two great countries the perils involved in the atmosphere of suspicion which had been created and maintained by the politicians, the Press, and certain interests."

Mr. Lloyd George's second reason was that continental nations were directing their energies more and more to the strengthening of their land forces. Germany had nothing which approximated to a two-Power standard

A SLUMP IN PANIC

in military strength. She was devoting herself to the expansion of her military resources. "I feel convinced," said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "that, even if Germany ever had any idea of challenging our supremacy at sea, the exigencies of the military situation must necessarily put it completely out of her head. Under these circumstances it seems to me that we can afford just quietly to maintain the superiority we possess, without making feverish attempts to increase it further."

"The third reason," said Mr. Lloyd George, "is the most hopeful of all. It is the spread of the revolt against military oppression throughout the whole of Christendom, certainly throughout the whole of Western Europe. . . . The common sense of the industrial classes, be they Capitalist or Labour, has arisen against this organized insanity. This is a propitious moment for reconsidering the question of armaments. And unless Liberalism seizes the opportunity"—this with great emphasis—"it will be false to its noblest traditions, and those who have the conscience of Liberalism in their charge will be written down for all time as having grossly betrayed their trust."

Two or three years ago, the Chancellor added, any such attempt would have been useless. It would have provoked a reaction and stimulated a panic. But now the dealers in panic would fail. "People have had enough of them in all lands for the moment, are familiar with their methods, and are profoundly distrustful of their aims."

Underneath the interview appears a letter from Sir John Brunner, President of the National Liberal Federation, in which he makes an earnest appeal to "every Liberal Association which believes in the good old Liberal doctrine of peace, retrenchment, and reform, to pass resolutions before the end of January in favour of reductions in our armament expenditure, so that the Government may have fresh evidence of the wishes of the party,

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before the military and naval estimates for next year are finally settled."

The Associations, thus besought, were not loath to respond. But there were men in the party, such as Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Haldane, Mr. Churchill, and Mr. McKenna, whose convictions on this subject were not shakable by any number of resolutions. The Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, lived up to the full meaning of the dignified words he had addressed to the last meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Leeds, very disappointing words to the majority of the delegates, who had expected a stronger lead on the subject of disarmament. "We are charged," said Mr. Asquith, "with a solemn trust, and in its performance it is our duty to maintain a vigilant watch on what the rest of the nations are doing, and to have always steadily and constantly in view the world-wide interests of which, for the time being, we are stewards."

Mr. Churchill got his money after all in March, 1914, when the sum voted for the Navy reached the breathless figure of 51½ million pounds. One reason for this continuous success in the face of such determined and impassioned opposition has already been suggested. The Conservative party was solidly behind the Imperialist Liberals in their armament policy. But in the spring of 1914 the Irish imbroglio had begun to fill the political stage, and with its Curragh incidents and its gun-runnings was to absorb the public attention down to the very eve of the great war. The British public was actually far more interested in the symptoms of civil war in Ulster in July than in the rather more formidable omens of Sarajevo and the Austrian ultimatum to Servia.

The leaders of the Unionist party can claim no superiority in this respect. They were as much taken up as anyone else in the fierce partisanship of the Irish quarrel. Party spirit in this country had risen to such a sense-

THE CRIME OF SARAJEVO

less pitch that the Germans might well conclude that we were on the point of revolution and civil war, and that their war-project need not be reconsidered from any fear of effective British intervention. The intrusion of the everlasting Irish question in its acutest form at this hour in the nation's destiny was an incalculable disaster. The statesmanship of those days cannot avoid some responsibility for the furious domestic dissensions that resulted at a time when everything, not only army and navy, but social and political conditions, should have been held in vigilant readiness to meet the one overwhelming danger that threatened the world.

So intense were our preoccupations that when on Sunday, June 28th, the spark was suddenly struck at Sarajevo which was to blow up the old European firework factory, few people in this country lost any sleep or felt any anxiety. Yet the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne, and his wife on that Kossovo anniversary provided the German war-party with the opportunity for which they had been waiting. For it is impossible not to notice that under all the negotiations that proceeded between June 28th and August 4th there lay a *dura necessitas*, that a powerful section of the German people intended war, and were determined that all efforts to avert it should fail.

It is unnecessary to record the successive stages in those critical negotiations. Historians will continue to discuss who was responsible for the final breakdown, whether even at the eleventh hour the peace of the world might not have been preserved, and similar questions. Certain facts of the situation have perhaps not been sufficiently understood. There is an impression that England was bound by Treaty—by the “scrap of paper”—to defend Belgian neutrality. This is not so. The Treaty of 1839 on this subject simply bound the five signatory Powers not to violate that neutrality, but obliged none of them

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individually or collectively to march an army in defence of it. As Palmerston said, the Treaty gave a right but did not impose an obligation to defend the Belgian frontiers. Gladstone's Treaties in 1870 with France and Russia did impose an obligation, but they expired in the following year.*

Even as regards France our hands were literally and formally free. Our relations with our cordial friend were fairly defined in the Grey-Cambon letters of November, 1912, which have been quoted above. But we were bound by every obligation of honour to come to the help of France if Germany were the aggressor. Mr. Gibson Bowles put the situation quite accurately when he wrote: "We were tied to France inextricably, tied by countless threads such as fastened down Gulliver while he slumbered in the land of little men." Mr. Lloyd George, who was shaken from anti-intervention in August, 1914, only by Germany's felon-blow on Belgium, lived to place much higher our duty to France. On August 7th, 1918, he declared in the House of Commons that "we had a compact with France, that if she were wantonly attacked we would go to her support." Challenged by Mr. Herbert Samuel, he substituted "obligation of honour" for the far too definite word "compact."†

Any public school boy will understand that in any case we were bound to "play the game" with our old friend of the Entente. But certain things had happened which, without laying on us a contractual obligation, made it impossible to stand wholly aloof. Implicitly relying on the British stand-by, France had withdrawn her navies to the Mediterranean and left her Channel and Atlantic ports exposed to attack. We in turn had withdrawn our biggest line-of-battle ships from the Mediterranean, and concentrated them in our home seas.

* See "A Short History of the Great War," A. F. Pollard, p. 10.

† See "The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy," Bk. iv. Chap. vi., sect. x.

ASSURANCE GIVEN TO FRANCE

These things had been done independently in form, but really in concert. We were not committed to fire a shot in a European conflict, but, as Mr. Churchill asks, could we, when it came to the point, honourably stand by and see the naked French coasts ravaged and bombarded by German Dreadnoughts under the eyes and within gun-shot of our Main Fleet?

To the extent of defending the French Channel and Atlantic ports, if attacked by Germany, we were bound by honour and interest to intervene. This obligation, indeed, forced the Government to its first definite war-commitment on August 2nd. Sir Edward Grey then handed the following assurance to the French Ambassador, M. Paul Cambon :

“ I am authorized to give the assurance that, if the German Fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against French coasts or shipping, the British Fleet will give all protection in its power. This assurance is, of course, subject to the policy of the Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding the Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German Fleet takes place.”

But even at that late hour and on the very brink of the precipice the Secretary of State still pointed out to the Ambassador that the Government could not bind themselves to declare war upon Germany, if it broke out between France and Germany to-morrow.

To the last moment, and almost beyond it, the Liberal Cabinet was sharply divided between the “ interventionists ” and the “ neutralists.” There is good reason to believe that the former party, including Mr. Asquith, Lord Haldane, Sir Edward Grey, Lord Crewe, Mr. McKenna,

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and Mr. Churchill, were for standing by France in any case, independently of Belgium. The other section, under the powerful leadership of Mr. Lloyd George, was for keeping out of the quarrel, and in the end was hardly moved from that standpoint even by the invasion of Belgium.

This division in the Cabinet accounts for a good deal that seemed hesitating and indecisive in Sir Edward Grey's dealings with the disputant Powers. It is not improbable that, if the Cabinet had been of one mind to fulfil every obligation of honour and interest at any cost and sacrifice, the course of the negotiations would have been different, and the disquieting suggestion is made that, given such a unanimity, the war might even have been avoided. Certainly there were moments in the twelve days before the war when there was a chance of peace if Sir Edward Grey had been able to declare in good set terms that if Germany attacked France or invaded Belgium Britain would at once declare war. The German Emperor was not blind to the seriousness of challenging the British power. As soon as he heard that the British Fleet was being kept together after the manœuvres, he at once instituted strong efforts to modify the Austrian demands on Servia, and to preserve the peace. If he had been faced with a business-like British statement that in certain definite events the British Empire would definitely go to war with him, he might have redoubled those efforts.

But at no time would a distinct promise of intervention in case France were attacked have been backed by a united Cabinet. Resignations would have come in like Christmas cards, and the Government would have fallen. Nor is it certain that any similar pronouncement on behalf of Belgium would have been endorsed by the Cabinet, or even by the nation, down to August 3rd. It was one thing to issue a threat of war or ultimatum in the face of a mere contingency and another to declare war, however

RESIGNATION OF MINISTERS

reluctantly, when the contingency had happened. Mr. Churchill's words are worthy of all attention: "Nothing less than the deeds of Germany would have converted the British nation to war. To act in advance of those deeds would have led to an exposure of division worse than the guarded attitude which we maintained, which brought our country into the war united. . . . By the time we could speak decisive words of warning the hour of words had certainly passed for ever."

Lord Loreburn considered that the Cabinet memorandum of August 2nd committed Britain irrevocably to war with Germany. It prohibited Germany from using her fleet against French coasts or shipping without any corresponding prohibition to the French regarding German coasts or shipping. The neutralist section of the Cabinet took the same view. Lord Morley and Mr. John Burns at once gave in their resignations. Seldom have martyrs testified with less sympathy from their fellow-men. The national conscience in entering the war was so free from self-reproach that it seemed eccentric and fanatical for anyone to act on the dictates of an opposing faith.

It is known that other members of the Cabinet were inclined also to go into the wilderness. But the events of that long third of August, and the state of public opinion, lent no encouragement to the formation of a "cave." And there was another even more effectual deterrent. Mr. Lloyd George, who had been for peace on Saturday, was for war on Monday. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had indeed held out to the very limits of reason and sense. On July 23rd in the debate on the third reading of the Finance Bill he had insisted once more on the wastefulness of the world's expenditure on materials of war. The Chancellor referred to some remarks made by Mr. Austen Chamberlain: "The right hon. gentleman said that you could not depend on any economy in armaments. I do not believe that. I think he will find that next year

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there will be a substantial economy without interfering in the slightest degree with the efficiency of the Navy." There is a strong irony about this prediction of an economy in armaments in 1915. Mr. Lloyd George was destined in that year to throw economy in war expenditure to the winds, and to inspire an output of munitions on a scale and at an expense transcending all previous experience or imagination.

"The expenditure in the last few years," the Chancellor continued, "has been very largely for the purpose of meeting what was recognized as a temporary emergency. It is a temporary emergency that disappears because of the expenditure we have incurred. I think it is a very serious thing for the right hon. gentleman, considering the position in the counsels of the great party to which he belongs, to assume that this expenditure on armaments is going on, and is not likely to be stopped."

Mr. Lloyd George went on to indicate certain signs that the world was getting tired of this wasteful competition in preparations for war. "The encouraging symptom I observe is that the movement of anxiety about them is a cosmopolitan one. Whether it will bear fruit this year or next, that I am not sure of; but I am certain that it will come. I can see signs and distinct signs of reaction throughout the world. Take a neighbour of ours, which we were very frightened about a few years ago. Relations are very much better. There is nothing of the snarling which we used to hear, more especially in the Press of these two great nations—I won't say rival nations, but two great empires. The feeling is better altogether. They begin to realise that they can co-operate for a common cause, and that points of co-operation are greater, more numerous and more important than points of possible conflict. All that is to the good."

It is curious to notice that this speech is reported in

THE GREAT LITTLE NATIONS

the same number of the *Times* that announces the ultimatum sent by Austria to Servia the day before; that this event is given a subsidiary place in the news, the place of honour being assigned to the Irish Conference then sitting, and that no reference whatever is made to the ultimatum in the leading articles. In twelve days' time England was at war with Germany, and engaged in the most tremendous conflict in the history of the world.

What at last broke down Mr. Lloyd George's long and stubborn consistency? For the answer to this question we must remember who Mr. Lloyd George was. First and foremost he was a Welshman, a member of a small nationality. His political sympathies had been widened to the national and Imperial circumferences, but he could always say, like the Swiss champion of state-rights, "My shirt is nearer to me than my coat."

This sentiment of nationality and of Welsh nationality has never weakened in Mr. Lloyd George. It threw him on to the unpopular side in the South African War when he was the most prominent and provocative of pro-Boers. It has filled his speeches with a thousand similitudes drawn from flood and field and mountain, and it was to colour his political and strategical views during a war and a settlement in which the small nationality was so largely concerned. In his memorable speech at the Queen's Hall, London, on September 19th, 1914, the same sentiment found vivid expression :

"The world owes much to little nations—and to little men! This theory of bigness, this theory that you must have a *big* Empire, and a *big* nation, and a *big* man—well, long legs have their advantage in a retreat. Frederick the First chose his warriors for their height, and that tradition has become a policy in Germany. Germany applies that ideal to nations, and will only allow six-foot-two nations to

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stand in the ranks. But ah! the world owes much to the little five-foot-five nations. The greatest art in the world was the work of little nations; the most enduring literature of the world came from little nations; the greatest literature of England came when she was a nation of the size of Belgium fighting a great Empire. The heroic deeds that thrill humanity through generations were the deeds of little nations fighting for their freedom. Yes, and the salvation of mankind came through a little nation. God has chosen little nations as the vessels by which He carries His choicest wines to the lips of humanity, to rejoice their hearts, to exalt their vision, to stimulate and strengthen their faith; and if we had stood by when two little nations * were being crushed and broken by the brutal hands of barbarism, our shame would have rung down the everlasting ages."

It has been suggested by a friendly and brilliant critic † that on those fateful days, the 3rd and 4th of August, Mr. Lloyd George learnt something about the popular war feeling from "forty-eight hours' contact with the streets of London," and that he caught the mood as "men catch fevers." There is no doubt that the man in the street was affected as Mr. Lloyd George was by the threat of the attack upon Belgium and by the attack itself. But there is no need to assume any infection of the kind. Mr. Lloyd George's pro-Belgian emotion was too instinctive to need any suggestion *ab extra*.

As it happens, Mr. Lloyd George himself gave in an interview in *Pearson's Magazine* for March, 1915, the psychological history of those decisive hours. To a question put to him by Mr. Henry Beach Needham, his interviewer, why, not having been a Jingo, he was "so

* Belgium and Serbia.

† E. T. Raymond: "Mr. Lloyd George," p. 167.

GREAT BRITAIN AND BELGIUM

whole-souly for this war," Mr. Lloyd George answered at once, "Belgium! The invasion of Belgium made the vital difference, as far as I was concerned, between peace and war. And I might add, the violation of Belgian neutrality turned our own people from a desire for peace to an insistence on war." And he continued :

"The Saturday after war had actually been declared on the Continent a poll of the electors of Great Britain would have shown 95 per cent. against embroiling this country in hostilities. Powerful City financiers whom it was my duty to interview this Saturday on the financial situation ended the conference with an earnest hope that Britain would 'keep out of it.' A poll on the following Tuesday would have resulted in a vote of 99 per cent. in favour of war, and the City interests which knew that our participation in a great European war would mean heavy loss, and might bring ruin on them, and were, therefore, unanimously opposed to war, by Tuesday were quite as unanimously in favour of it.

"What had happened in the meantime? The Colonies were there on Tuesday; so was the trade and the shipping and the commerce; all the selfish inducements were quite as potent on Tuesday as they were on Saturday. The revolution in public sentiment was attributable entirely to an attack made by Germany on a small and unprotected country which had done her no wrong; and what Britain was not prepared to do for interests political and commercial, she readily risked to help the weak and the helpless. Our honour as a nation is involved in this war, because we are bound in an honourable obligation to defend the independence, the liberty, the integrity of a small neighbour that has lived peaceably; but she could not have compelled

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us, being weak. The man who declines to discharge his debt because his creditor is too poor to enforce it is a blackguard."

The 95 per cent. in this passage perhaps requires a little discounting. On the Sunday morning a meeting of prominent Unionists had met at Lansdowne House, as the result of which the following letter was handed to Mr. Asquith during the Cabinet sessions of that day :

August 2nd, 1914.

" DEAR MR. ASQUITH,—

" Lord Lansdowne and I feel it our duty to inform you that in our opinion, as well as in that of all the colleagues whom we have been able to consult, it would be fatal to the honour and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate in supporting France and Russia at the present juncture and we offer our unhesitating support to the Government in any measures that they may consider necessary for that object.

" Yours very truly,

" A. BONAR LAW." *

There is no reference, it will be noticed, to Belgium in this letter. These gentlemen were probably for backing France, even if Germany had entered that country *via* the Vosges Mountains instead of the Meuse. Also most of their political friends and followers were like-minded. Yet it remains true that the majority in the country were, like Mr. Lloyd George, thrown on to the side of war by the outrage on Belgium. And even in the case of the rest their decision was prompted for the vastly greater number by a feeling of chivalrous obligation to France rather than from any hatred of Germany. It may indeed be questioned whether Mr. Maxse loved his brother-

* See an article, "Retrospect and Reminiscences," in *The National Review*, August, 1918, by the Editor, Mr. Maxse.

PRINCE VON LICHNOWSKY'S LETTER

German or needed to be urged upon the war-path by an outrage upon a small nationality. But he was not a representative person, though the outbreak of war did fulfil many of his predictions, if it did not justify all his previous language.

Mr. Lloyd George's interviewer drew from him an opinion on this question of interested motive. Was it not part of England's motive to "take on" Germany when Russia and France were present allies? "It is as difficult to measure the motives of nations as it is of individuals," the Chancellor replied. "I know it is part of the German policy to represent our interference as a calculated move of selfish craft to capture the trade and shipping of a dangerous rival, and to annex colonies whose prosperity had excited our greed. But this, I know, is true—after the guarantee given that the German Fleet would not attack the coast of France or annex any French territory, I would not have been a party to a declaration of war, had Belgium not been invaded, and I can say the same for most, if not all, of my colleagues."

Almost certainly not "all," though "most" is true enough. As we have seen, and as will further appear from Sir Edward Grey's pronouncement on August 3rd, the "Imperialist" section of the Cabinet would scarcely have favoured such limited liability warfare. Mr. Lloyd George's reference is to a letter sent by the German Ambassador, the high-minded and peace-loving Prince von Lichnowsky, as late as August 3rd to the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Westminster Gazette* stating that if England would remain neutral, Germany would refrain from naval operations on the French coast. It appears from this that even on August 3rd, Mr. Lloyd George and his friends still remained undecided. Not until the 4th, when news came that the German bonnets were actually over the border, can the last hesitations have been removed.

As regards Lichnowsky's communication to the Press

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it came too late and did not go far enough. It reached Sir Edward Grey just before he made his speech on the 3rd. "Fresh news comes in," he told the House, "and I cannot give this in any formal way; but I understand that the German Government would be prepared, if we would pledge ourselves to neutrality, to agree that its Fleet would not attack the northern coast of France. I have only heard that shortly before I came to the House. But it is far too narrow an agreement for us."

In substance again Mr. Lloyd George's reply to his interviewer was correct. It was easy and useful to the Germans to set down England's intervention to a desire to "down" an awkward and dangerous rival, and, strangely enough, similar attributions have been made during these post-war years by our French friends. One need not assert that such motives had no play in any British bosoms. But with the most scrupulous regard for truth and sincerity one may say that they scarcely counted at all as a force in bringing us into the war. The Englishman is far too easy-going and "absent-minded" to sustain a long mood of hostility or hatred towards any foreign Power. He had never risen or sunk, with regard to Germany, to the *delenda est Carthago* spirit. Germans had every honour and opportunity accorded to them in this country. They were Mayors of our cities and conductors of our orchestras. There was no feeling against the individual German before, and not much during the war. "I will not say a single word in disparagement of the German people," said Mr. Lloyd George a month after the war began. "They are a great people, and have great qualities of head and hand and heart. I believe, in spite of recent events, there is as great a store of kindness in the German peasant as in any peasant in the world. But he has been drilled into a false idea of civilization. It is efficient. It is capable. But it is a hard civilization, it is a selfish civilization, it is a material civilization."

RELATIONS WITH FRANCE

The British race fought Prussianism rather than the Prussian. And it fought without undue hatred. It is true we never spoke of "that sweet enemy, Germany," as in the old times we spoke of "that sweet enemy, France." But we left the Gott-strafes and the lyrics of hate to our foemen, in whom they were never anything but symptoms of weakness. And how quickly after the war all sour and bitter feeling between the two peoples passed away was evident to the writer when he visited the British zone of occupation soon after the war ended and saw the almost idyllic relations that had sprung up between the German country folk and British soldiers encamped in the quaint villages and romantic forests on either bank of the Rhine.

The reader will now fully appreciate the historic speech in which Sir Edward Grey committed the question of peace and war to the House of Commons on August 3rd. He had no secret and binding engagement to spring upon the House. Parliament, like the nation, was perfectly free to make its choice. His statement to M. Cambon, of November 22nd, 1912, which he read to the House, was sufficient evidence of that. It is true, we had a long-standing friendship with France, but he proceeded :

"How far that friendship entails obligation, let every man look into his own heart and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself. I construe it as I feel it; but I do not wish to urge upon anyone else more than their feelings dictate. The House, individually and collectively, may judge for itself. The French Fleet is now in the Mediterranean, and the Northern and Western coasts of France are absolutely undefended because of the feeling of confidence and friendship between the two countries. My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet, engaged in a war which France had not sought, came down the Channel and bombarded the un-

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defended coast of France, we could not stand aside. France was entitled to know at once, whether in the event of attack on her unprotected Northern and Western coasts she could count on British support, and I therefore gave the promise yesterday to the French Ambassador. It was not a Declaration of War."

The question of Belgian neutrality was still more serious. He had put the question to France and Germany whether they were willing to respect that neutrality. France agreed, but the German Foreign Minister said he must consult Emperor and Chancellor before replying. As a matter of fact news had just arrived of a German ultimatum to Belgium. Sir Edward Grey continued :

" If true, and if she accepted, her independence would be gone, whatever might be offered in return. If her independence goes, that of Holland will follow. If France was beaten, if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence, and then Holland, and then Denmark, consider what would be at stake from the point of view of British interests. It may be said that we might stand aside and intervene at the end to adjust things to our own point of view. If in a crisis like this we turn away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian Treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect we should have lost. And if we are engaged in war, we shall suffer but little more than if we stand aside. I do not believe for a moment that, even if we stood aside, we should be able to undo what had happened, to prevent the whole of the West of Europe—if that had been the result of the war—falling under the domination of a single Power, and I am quite sure that our moral position would

AN IMPORTANT DECISION

be such as to have lost us all respect. Though the Fleet is mobilized and the Army is mobilizing, we have taken no engagement yet to send an Expeditionary Force out of the country ; but if, as seems not improbable, we are forced to take our stand on those issues, then, I believe, when the country realizes what is at stake, we shall be supported, not only in the House of Commons, but by the determination, the courage, and the endurance of the whole country."

It was no small advantage that this war, so necessary, as it seemed, from the points of view of our honour, our legitimate interest and the welfare of the civilized world, should have been declared by a Liberal Government. The Conservative element in the nation might be trusted to be wholeheartedly for war. Yet it could never be misconstrued as a Tory or a Jingo war. That it was declared by a Liberal Government secured the practical unanimity of the whole nation. That Mr. Lloyd George remained a member of such a Government and approved of the declaration of war brought in the whole body of British Nonconformity which had supported that statesman throughout his long testification for peace and international good-will.

Mr. Lloyd George's decision in favour of intervention was a more important and significant event than has been generally realized. If his decision had gone otherwise, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had followed Lord Morley, he would have been followed by half a dozen other Ministers at the least. The Government would have fallen and a deep and broad cleavage would have been driven through the heart of the nation. The docility of the people to their political and party leaders is surprising, and if Mr. Lloyd George had declared even the invasion of Belgium to be no justifying *casus belli*, the majority of

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the Liberal party would probably have followed him into opposition. Such was the heavy load of responsibility which Mr. Lloyd George had to bear in these opening days of August. He had struggled against war until war was unavoidably forced upon him and his country.

The conscience of England when she sent the ultimatum of August 4th was troubled with no doubt or self-reproach. The blame of the war was not hers. She could await the stroke of midnight with a quiet determination. Those passing hours may well have impressed Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Harold Spender tells us how he used to describe the moment when the Western world passed from peace to war as the most solemn and awful in his whole life. "We sat waiting for Big Ben to strike the hour when the ultimatum expired. We all fell quite silent. As the great blows of the hammer sounded on the bell we seemed to be passing into another world."

Mr. Asquith's speech to the House of Commons on the following day voiced in his own Roman eloquence the feelings of a whole nation and Empire. War, he said, had been declared with the utmost reluctance and regret. It had been forced on us. Germany had asked us to betray our friends and disregard our obligations at the very moment when she was tearing up her own and our solemn treaty as a worthless scrap of paper. If we had dallied or hesitated we should have been false to the interests of our own country. The Prime Minister continued in his stately manner :

"If I am asked what we are fighting for, I reply in two sentences. In the first place to fulfil a solemn international obligation—an obligation which, if it had been entered into between private persons, would have been regarded as an obligation, not only of law but of honour, which no self-respecting man could possibly have repudiated. Secondly, we are

A GOOD CAUSE

fighting to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed, in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and overmastering Power. I do not believe that any great nation ever entered into a great controversy with a clearer conscience and a stronger conviction that it is fighting not for aggression nor for the maintenance of its own selfish interest, but in defence of principles vital to the civilization of the world."

But very few in high or in low place had any adequate conception of the immensity of the disaster or of the destined scope and duration of the war or of the effect it was to have on the moral and political status of the whole world.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPENING DAYS

HAVING once entered the struggle, Mr. Lloyd George never looked back. He had been forced into war by Germany's action, and he was determined at any rate to be the winner. In this he resembled another great British war-minister, the younger Pitt. The curious may, indeed, find many other points of resemblance between the William Pitt of 1792 and the Lloyd George of 1914. Both men abominated the idea of war; both were intent on measures of social reform which war would indefinitely postpone. Both, as Chancellors of the Exchequer, were responsible for the national finances and were officially as well as personally opposed to the waste and disorder entailed by war in the national accounts.

The curious may find many other similarities. Like Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Pitt hoped for peace, and believed in peace almost to the very brink of war. We have seen how the latter statesman refused to the last hour to regard war as inevitable. In February, 1792, just twelve months before war with France broke out, Pitt, in a famous speech opening a Budget, in which he repealed taxes and added to his sinking fund, declared that: "Unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation of Europe we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment." One is reminded of Gladstone assuring Queen Victoria that "in the opinion of his government there was no matter known to be in controversy of a nature to warrant a disturbance of the general peace," on the very day when war was declared between France and Germany. Even

WILLIAM PITT'S FRENCH POLICY

within ten weeks of the war, which broke out in February, 1793, Pitt was writing to Lord Stafford in the hope and expectation that England would stand aloof.

In both cases, too, this prolonged determination was broken down by the violation of solemn treaties, at the earlier date by the French in the throwing open of the navigation of the Scheldt, at the later by the invasion of Belgium. The unscrupulous disregard by the French of the Treaties of 1785 and 1788 relating to the Scheldt really forced Pitt's hand. Yet even later, even after the execution of Louis XVI, it is recorded by a contemporary that Pitt was still "sincerely anxious for peace." To both statesmen, also, the alternative of resignation presented itself, and in both cases, happily, it was refused.

Once in the quarrel Pitt, in the words of Lord Rosebery, "fought with all his might and main." Lloyd George did likewise, with this difference: that while Pitt sought always for some chance of shortening the war and restoring peace,* Lloyd George kept his eye steadily and singly on a clean and victorious finish for his own country. It is remarkable that on both occasions England entered into war in the expectation that it would be soon over. A speech of Pitt's in March, 1793, makes it clear that he fully expected peace before the end of the year. Mr. Lloyd George was among those who foresaw that a war machine and a war spirit like the German were not to be broken by a few months' effort, but the nation as a whole marvelled at Lord Kitchener's estimate of a three years' struggle.

These comparisons between the two epochs might be usefully extended. In both cases England was faced with a formidable, overweening and aggressive foe who in the latter only wanted a Napoleon to attain to a "perfect strength." In both cases England went down into a

* Pitt made four direct overtures for peace in these earlier days of the French War. See Lord Rosebery's wise and charming monograph on Pitt, p. 148.

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valley of the deepest shadow. The year 1797, described as "the darkest and most desperate that any British Minister ever had to face," had its subsequent fellow in 1915. Pitt faced it out with a dauntless spirit which "enabled this country, in spite of incapacity and blunders and debt, in face of the hostility of a surpassing genius and of a world in arms, finally to surmount its difficulties." And so we are able to understand, continues his biographer, why Pitt remained long after his death the embodiment and watchword of British determination.

It is obvious that the England of 1915 was not degenerate, and it may be fairly claimed for Mr. Lloyd George that he, too, before the war closed, was to become "the embodiment and watchword of British determination" in the face of discouragement and disaster, and even counsels of weakness from less confident spirits. Pitt's capacity as a War Minister has been diversely estimated. Some regard him as a heaven-appointed genius in this sphere, while Macaulay thinks him incapable. The popular verdict is nearest the truth, that as an organizer of victory and an exponent of the national spirit he was inferior only to his illustrious father. It is always dangerous to anticipate the ultimate verdicts of history, but it seems probable that the name of the statesman who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War, and Prime Minister through the last four years' agony will be as closely and conspicuously associated with the Great War of 1914-1918 as was Chatham's name with the French wars of his time, and Pitt's with the earlier phase of the long Napoleonic struggle.

Lloyd George, like his great predecessor, who was also Prime Minister, held the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer at the outbreak of war. He had to deal with the immediate and shattering effects of the disaster on our credit and exchanges, and he produced two of the great war budgets. No one can have foreseen or even

HIGH FINANCE DISORGANIZED

imagined the effect of such a world-calamity as the European War would have on the finance and commerce of this country. London was the keystone of the world's trade. Not only had we an enormous international commerce of our own but we provided a great deal of the machinery which ran the trade of the rest of the world. We supplied much of the capital that exploited the mineral and vegetable wealth of our planet, we were the sea-carriers of half the world's goods, and by the bills of exchange drawn upon London we enabled the nations to exchange their goods.

The great war fell like a bomb into all this complicated and delicate machinery. Mr. Kipling has a story which tells how a ship of ill-repute carrying on illegitimate trade operations in far Eastern seas was at last overtaken by a revenue cruiser, and, refusing to lie to, received a shell which burst in her engine-room. The reader will recall the comprehensive damage that resulted, and the agonized and despairing effort of the crew to effect the most elementary repairs. This was the sort of thing that happened in the financial and commercial world when the great war broke out. Mr. Lloyd George, always a master of metaphor, employed another to illustrate the effect. "It was exactly," he said, "as if a shell had broken an arch in an aqueduct, and there was a cessation of the flow that had been going on before. What we had to do was temporarily to repair the arch so that the flow should continue."

And well did the breakdown gang do its work. A permanent committee was formed to deal with these sudden emergencies. Mr. Lloyd George had efficient helpers, conspicuous among them being Lord Reading. But much of the credit belongs to the Chancellor as the selecting and directing overseer of the operations. He quickly enlisted the confidence of the City, the Thersites of Limehouse being speedily forgotten in the Nestor of

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those wise and saving counsels that rescued the nation's credit.

The position in the closing days of July was indeed a novelty. The Bank holiday as well as the general holidays were at hand, and people wanted money for their annual trips to Blackpool and Margate. Some difficulty was caused when the joint stock banks began to hoard their gold stocks by paying out Bank of England notes instead of gold. Large quantities of these notes were changed into gold at the Bank of England, which added to the difficulties of the bank. But otherwise there was no "run on the banks," and very little hoarding of gold, even when war became a certainty. There was no hiding of treasure-chests, no large transfer of sovereigns and half-sovereigns from the savings bank to the old stocking. Some slight disposition to buy in sacks of meal and flour was noticeable, but this rapidly passed away. Confidence, thanks largely to the emergency measures at once taken, was soon re-established.

But the most important business was to attend to the S O S of the Bill of Exchange and the nation's credit. Mr. Lloyd George in his speech in the House of Commons of November 27th, 1914, summarized all the measures taken. He pointed out how half the business of the world was done through London not in gold but in paper currency. What happened, he asked, when the war began? "All this fine, delicate paper machinery was crashed into by a great war affecting more than half, and very nearly two-thirds, of the whole population of the world. . . . It was just as if one gave a violent kick to an ant-hill. For a short time there was much bewildering consternation in all the marts and exchanges of the world. The top of the ant-hill was off, and for a moment there was great fright."

A deadlock followed, but it was not our fault. Remittances from abroad ceased to come in. There were Bills

THE MORATORIUM

of Exchange out, with British signatures, to an amount of some 400 million pounds or more. These had been discounted, the cash being found in this country. The failure was not with England but with the foreigner debtors whose remittances to meet their bill obligations came in very slowly or not at all. The banks were deeply involved. They were largely dependent on the accepting-houses and the bill-brokers, the bill-brokers were largely dependent on the accepting-houses, and the accepting-houses were dependent on their foreign correspondents, who, owing to the breakdown of the exchanges, could not send their remittances.*

It is difficult to set forth the Government's devices to meet the situation without technical details comprehensible only to the expert. The first important measure was the Bill Moratorium proclaimed on Sunday, August 2nd, 1914, and subsequently extended. It enabled acceptors† to postpone for a month payment of any bill accepted before August 4th on reacceptance for the amount plus interest to the new date of payment at the Bank Rate prevailing on the date of reacceptance. This gave a respite to acceptors unable to meet their bills on maturing, and, no doubt, prevented a crowd of bankruptcies.

Then came the turn of the banks. There was, firstly, the general Moratorium proclaimed on August 6th, 1914, and also subsequently extended, which gave the banks and other debtors (with some exceptions such as wages

* See "British Finance (1914-1921)," by A. W. Kirkaldy, p. 8.

† It may be useful to give an illustration of a sample Bill of Exchange.

MANCHESTER,

Aug. 7, 1912.

Four months after date pay Henry Brown or order the sum of two hundred pounds.

JAMES SMITH.

To CHARLES JONES,
16, QUEEN STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Here James Smith is the "drawer," Henry Brown is the "payee" and Charles Jones on agreeing to pay becomes the "acceptor."

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and salaries and rates and taxes), power to suspend payment for one month of debts payable before the date of the proclamation. Secondly, the currency and Bank Notes Act of the same date authorised the Treasury to suspend the Bank Act if necessary, when an unlimited amount of Bank Notes would have been available, if required. The suspension took place but only for a very short time. During that period the Bank of England exceeded the issue limit of uncovered notes fixed by the Bank Act of 1844.

The same Act empowered the Treasury to issue Currency Notes of £1 and 10s. as legal tender for any amount. These notes soon became more or less familiar to everybody.* To give time for these notes to be printed, August Bank holiday was extended from Monday, August 3rd, to Thursday, August 6th, inclusive. The notes were issued on Friday, August 7th.

The Currency Note had many important effects. It enabled the banks to obtain, if required, 225 millions of legal tender currency, and thus to meet the growing public demand for currency with the continual rise in wages and the prices of commodities. It also enabled the Bank of England to conserve the gold stock of the kingdom, some of which was exported with the object of rehabilitating foreign exchanges when adverse to our country. Also it incidentally provided the Government with a large loan towards the cost of the war.†

The shoring and buttressing process continued. On August 13th, in order to stimulate new business in the bill market, and so provide international currency, the Government announced that the Bank of England, under a Government guarantee against loss, would discount at

* It may be interesting to read the exact words of the Act:—

"The Treasury may, subject to the provisions of this Act, issue Currency Notes for one pound and for ten shillings, and these notes shall be current in the United Kingdom in the same manner and to the same extent and as fully as sovereigns and half-sovereigns are current, and shall be legal tender in the United Kingdom for the payment of any amount."

† See Kirkaldy's "Public Finance," p. 24.

RESCUE OPERATIONS

Bank Rate, without recourse to the holders, all approved bills accepted before August 4th ; also that the acceptors of such bills discounted at the Bank of England might postpone payment at maturity by paying interest at 2 per cent. above Bank Rate. This measure did much to restore British credit abroad. It appears from the statements by Mr. Lloyd George on November 27th that the total amount of bills discounted under the Government guarantee had been £120,000,000.

It is significant that the London and New York stock exchanges were closed on July 31st, those of Vienna and Paris having preceded them by three days. We may well believe how on the eve of the war the London exchange was flooded with international stocks seeking liquidation at almost any price. The exchange resumed business on January 4th, 1915, under severe restrictions as to hours and prices for sales. Help was given to the Stock Exchange by the loan of funds on securities, as announced by the Treasury on October 31st. Conditions in the business world were eased by a measure which provided that no man should put any legal process into operation without first seeking the sanction of the courts, and relief was given to debtors genuinely suffering from the state of war. The Government also took in hand with great promptitude and effect the urgent question of shipping insurance.

Such in brief description were some of the emergency measures for which Mr. Lloyd George was responsible at the outbreak of the war. The rehabilitation of bills of exchange by providing advances on approved bills, the provision of small currency in the issue of £1 and 10s. notes, the closing of the Stock Exchange and the lending of funds on securities, the provision for the relief of debtors who were financially disabled by the war, and the war insurance of shipping—in these provisions England re-established her foreign exchange, provided for the movement of her mercantile fleets, organized her internal

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business, ended the demoralization of securities, and relieved much of the embarrassment caused by the outbreak of war.*

When we come to consider Mr. Lloyd George's first war budget which he introduced on November 17th, 1914, our minds are again taken back to his great predecessor William Pitt. It was Pitt who established the sound English tradition, adopted by Gladstone and other Chancellors of the Exchequer, of paying as much as possible of the cost of any war by immediate taxation rather than by throwing the burden on to future generations. He explored every possible source of revenue, and in 1798 introduced that "dire hydra evoked for the destruction of the regicide power of France," the justly hated income tax, which, in Mr. Morley's words, was "sent back again to its gruesome limbo after the ruin of Napoleon," to be afterwards exhumed as a permanent and too conspicuous feature of our taxational system.

Mr. Gladstone remarked that if Pitt had imposed this tax at the beginning of the war instead of five years later he need have incurred no debt at all. That criticism is not valid. The nation would never have endured such an unpopular and inquisitorial impost at the outset of a war when the finances of the country were intact and before other sources of revenue had been tried. The imposition of the income tax by Pitt was in any case a heroic measure. As Mr. Lloyd George pointed out in his speech of November 17th, "had Mr. Pitt not set that noble and heroic example, and had it not been followed by his successors, we should to-day have been devoting the proceeds of a fourpenny income tax to pay interest in respect of money which he found out of taxation, which otherwise would have been borrowed and added to the National Debt; and since that day, between £1,500,000,000 and £2,000,000,000 would have been paid upon that

* See the "Financial History of Great Britain (1914-1918)," by Frank L. McVey.

THE FIRST WAR BUDGET

amount, because it would have crippled and depressed his borrowing powers."

Pitt proposed his direct impost, which exacted no less than a tenth on incomes of £200 and above, in a speech which was described as in itself "a complete course of public economy, a work, and one of the finest works, upon practical and theoretical finance that ever distinguished the pen of a philosopher and statesman." If Mr. Lloyd George's speech introducing his first war Budget scarcely merits such a tribute, it was an informative, interesting address as well as a stirring appeal to the nation to invest generously in the first great war-loan of £350,000,000, "the largest loan," he said in his speech of November 27th, "ever raised in the history of the world for any purpose."

He made a comparison between the first year's cost of the war just begun and preceding wars in British history. We were estimating for £450,000,000 as the cost of the first full year. The largest amount ever before spent by Great Britain on a single year's war was £71,000,000. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars cost an aggregate sum of £831,000,000, which was spread over a conflict lasting twenty years. The Crimean figure was £67,500,000, spread over three, and the Boer War £211,000,000, over four financial years.

The cost of the French wars was met as to loans by £440,000,000, as to taxes by £391,000,000. The latter figure stands for a really heroic achievement, as Pitt estimated the taxable income of Great Britain at the end of the eighteenth century at only £102,000,000. Mr. Lloyd George gave £250,000,000 as the largest possible estimate of the total national income in those years. The revenue raised for war and normal services in those years ranged from £50,000,000 to £70,000,000 a year. That meant that at one stage one-fifth of the nation's income, at another one-fourth, at another between one-fourth

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and one-third was taken for public purposes. The revenue of this country at the outset of the war was thought to be £2,300,000,000 a year. If we emulated the sacrifices of our ancestors, we should be raising between £450,000,000 and £700,000,000 a year, and, added Mr. Lloyd George rather too optimistically, "no borrowing would be necessary."

It is useful to compare the bill for the Great War as finally added up, with the cost of previous wars and with these forecasts of probable expenditure in 1914. The figures given by Mr. Baldwin, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the House of Commons were these :

Exchequer issues between April 1st, 1914	
and March 31st (1919)*	£9,590,000,000
From direct taxation	£1,820,000,000
From indirect taxation and other sources of	
revenue	£910,000,000
By borrowing at home	£5,500,000,000
By borrowing abroad	£1,360,000,000

If this is not quite so heroic as the effort during the French or Crimean Wars to pay for war as far as possible on the ready-money system, it was a highly praiseworthy record, showing that the nation played up to the high ideal presented at diverse epochs by Pitt, Gladstone,† St. Aldwyn, Lloyd George.

Mr. Lloyd George never assented to those who thought the war would be quickly over and were half-indignant at Lord Kitchener's estimate of three years, under the

* Figures available only for complete financial years.

† The Gladstonian *locus classicus* on this subject in Crimean days was this : " These were the convictions which Mr. Pitt and the successors of Mr. Pitt entertained of their duty to their country. This was the idea they had of their obligations to posterity. Do you suppose that in those days, when the Duke of Wellington was crowning the British arms with fresh laurels from year to year, your fathers did not think they were fighting for the advantage of posterity ? Did they not think they were fighting for our advantage—for we were posterity to them—when they made such efforts to meet those tremendous charges by sacrifices of their own ? Why cannot you do that in 1854 which your fathers did in 1798 ? What were their means as compared with ours ? "

THE CHANCELLOR'S WARNING

mark though that proved to be. It is hard to believe that many people in this country fully expected the war to be finished by Christmas of 1914. Even Mr. Charles Sarolea, the well-known Belgian author, expressed a similar view. How those of us who held this opinion thought the tremendously powerful and compact machinery of the German military system was to be so speedily scrapped, did not appear. Still less could we have explained how the Germanic national spirit, stronger and more enduring than any fabric of iron and steel, would so soon be cowed and broken. That mistake Mr. Lloyd George never made. He knew better perhaps than most people that a nation's resistance is not strictly limited by its supply of munitions of war or even of food. The national spirit and the love of freedom have again and again prevailed over "exile, hunger, shame and death."

Some of us in thus expecting a swift and easy victory were forgetting the *imponderabilia*, those spiritual forces which the Germans far more persistently and fatally disregarded. "I am not going to express an opinion," he said in this budget speech, "about the duration of the war. There is no man, however equipped and however competent, who can express an absolutely reliable opinion upon that subject. There may be accidents which will shorten the war. There may be accidents that will lengthen the war. It depends upon questions military. It depends upon questions political," and the Chancellor continues, "it depends upon subtle human considerations that are outside the purview of both. I am therefore not going to express an opinion. We are fighting a tough enemy. We are fighting an enemy that cannot submit to any terms we can accept—to any terms we can prudently accept—without a smashing defeat." Again, even in September, when the "duration" was generally being limited to Christmas, he warned his hearers at the Queen's Hall: "They (the Germans) think we cannot beat them.

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It will not be easy. It will be a long job ; it will be a terrible war ; but in the end we shall march through terror to triumph."

Eminent statesmen are often poor prophets. They are sometimes more astray than quite ordinary people in calculating forces and reading the signs of their times, just as the Meteorological Office is often less weather-wise than the hedger and ditcher. Mr. Lloyd George has not wholly escaped this infirmity, but his forecasts and warnings at the outset of the struggle were wise and prescient. One of the reasons he urged for shouldering an immediate and heavy burden of taxation was that by so doing we should mitigate in advance the troubles of the lean years which would follow the war. "I think we can look forward," he said in the same speech, "to something like four or five years when the industries of this country will have the artificial stimulus which comes from these abnormal conditions. When that period is over, we shall be face to face with one of the most serious industrial situations with which we have ever been confronted. We shall have exhausted an enormous amount of the capital of the world which would otherwise have been available for industry. Our purchasers both here and abroad will be crippled. Their purchasing power will have been depressed, and—let us make no mistake—Great Britain will be confronted with some of the gravest problems with which it has ever been faced." Every twenty millions that could be raised annually by taxation during this period would mean four or five millions taken off the permanent burdens thereafter imposed on the country. "It is easier," the Chancellor sententiously remarked, "to raise taxes in a period of war and to lower them in a period of peace than it would be to raise even lower taxes in a period of peace."

Here was wise and true statesmanship. Mr. Lloyd George's task was not a popular one. A democracy is

THE SILVER BULLET

usually readier to enter into a great war than to pay for it. Yet, as Lord Morley pointed out, it is salutary and needful that the payment should be made, and should be poignantly felt, so that war may not be too lightly incurred. The function of fastening the burden on to the back belonged to the Chancellor. He performed, he said, the least picturesque and the most perilous duty of all the combatants. In one of his homely metaphors, he was the coal-heaver who filled the bunkers of the battle-ships, and was cursed by everybody as a nuisance.

Eloquence was once defined in old Hellenic times as "the art of persuasion,"* and Mr. Lloyd George was certainly one of the best criers of a public loan that ever went round with bell and bag. Better than most men he knew the value of a word or a phrase that would cling to the memory and be tossed from mouth to mouth. He rediscovered the "silver bullet." "We have won," he said, "with the silver bullet before. We financed Europe in the greatest war we ever fought, and that is how we won. Of course British courage and British tenacity always come in, and they always will, but let us remember that British cash told too. When the others were quite exhausted, we were getting our second breath, and our third and our fourth. We shall spend our last before we are beaten."†

With the speech at the Queen's Hall on September 19th we enter that long and diversified series of addresses, those modern "Philippics" in which Mr. Lloyd George proclaimed his *sursum corda* to his fellow-countrymen during the long struggle. As we have seen, Mr. Lloyd George fully understood what an asset the enemy possessed in its national will to victory, which nothing could resist and quell but the possession of a more

* "Ῥητορικὴ ἐστὶ πειθῶς δημιουργός"—a definition ascribed to the old teachers of rhetoric, Tisias and Corax.

† From a speech at the Treasury on September 8th, 1914, to a deputation from Municipal Corporations on the subject of local expenditure.

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determined and better justified purpose on the part of the Allies.

The Chancellor was not afraid to rebuke any national tendency to belittle or ridicule this spirit in the German people. Looking back now, we can discern a good deal of mere war animus in the contempt we expressed in war days for the German *kultur* which contained much to admire and respect. In many respects, especially in town administration, in the outward setting of life and in educational equipment, the Germans had advanced far beyond ourselves. As was his wont, Mr. Lloyd George could see through the mists of passion and prejudice to the people beyond, whose heart beat as soundly and humanly as our own. There is a very wise German saying, *Hinter den Bergen sind auch Leute*, "there are human beings also behind the mountains," and Mr. Lloyd George never forgot this. He acted in the spirit of it at Genoa when mountains of prejudice were obscuring the vision of a great people of 120,000,000 souls.

Mr. Lloyd George did much to check those spiritual vices which, like all others, germinate in time of war. It was wise doctrine and sound criticism he gave to the folks of Bangor on a Welsh Sunday in February, 1915. "We laugh," he said, "at things in Germany that ought to terrify us. We say, 'Look at the way they are making their bread out of potatoes! Ha, ha!'" Aye, that potato-bread spirit is something which is more to dread than to mock at. I fear that more than I do even von Hindenburg's strategy, efficient as it may be. That is the spirit in which a country should meet a great emergency, and instead of mocking at it we ought to emulate it." No comparisons are possible between the Athenian democracy in the days of Philip of Macedon and the British people during the Great War. But the classical scholar cannot read these war speeches of Mr. Lloyd George without recalling how Demosthenes checked and stimulated and

A MASTER ORATOR

counselled his own people at a great crisis in their history.

The British statesman may not himself have been wholly free from the worser symptoms of the war-fever. His vocabulary sometimes degenerated. He described the Prussian Junker as "the road-hog of Europe." But such lapses are far between, and one of Mr. Lloyd George's highest services during the war, we may say, was that he lifted the national endeavour on to a high moral plane, that he discouraged every lower mood and based the national cause on grounds of reason, justice and humanity.

Mr. Lloyd George is a born orator—an orator in two languages. He has a full share of that magnetic or demonic power which is so rare and yet so essential to the success of a great democratic leader. It is quite an incommunicable gift, being the outcome and expression of a combination of moral, intellectual and even physical attributes which is not often realized and with which a man is congenitally endowed. Those who have it not may be eloquent and wise and high-principled, but they can never sway the heart and will of a people like the man who wields this strange power.

It was interesting at the great European conferences after the close of the war to notice this distinction. A French orator like that wise and able statesman M. Barthou was voluble in his speech, tremendously emphatic in voice and gesture. But when Mr. Lloyd George rose to address the representatives of forty nations of the world we were in a totally different climate. A few words spoken sometimes almost in a whisper, yet audible through a large chamber, had all the effect, and more, of the loudest emphasis and the most violent gesticulation.

The possessor of this quasi-mesmeric power is in some respects to be envied, though the gift may bring its own special responsibilities. The man who knows by long experience that he can exert this spell has a source of

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self-confidence which nothing else can supply. He has a delight, in facing a big assembly, in noting the hush of expectation when he rises, and in feeling the intensity of interest with which his hearers await every word and sentence, which must be among the real and abiding pleasures of life. Mr. Gladstone had this wonderful power, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain also, and Mr. Lloyd George has it to a very marked degree.

But it must not be confused with mere vocal fluency. One knows speakers of loose and facile tongues who signally fail to work any such effects on the minds and hearts of their hearers. It may be unchivalrous to add that women, who are so often fluent in speech, seldom, if ever, possess this special "charism" of powerful and moving eloquence, whose source is in character quite as much as in intellect.

At the same time it does not exempt its possessor from the labour of effort and preparation. It may be questioned whether Abraham Lincoln, who was truly endowed with this prophetic and apostolic genius, uttered his Gettysburg speech, short as it was, wholly without premeditation. Mr. Lloyd George is understood to prepare what he is going to say with great care. His speeches usually read well. They have a literary value which ensures that. But their effect cannot wholly be conveyed by the newspaper report. It will be remembered how Cicero in his writings on oratory insisted on the importance of what he called *actio* or gesture. Demosthenes, asked what was most important in an orator's equipment, said action or delivery, and it held the second and third place as well. Cicero called it aptly the language of the body—*quasi sermo corporis*. I do not suppose that Mr. Lloyd George practises pose and gesture before a pier-glass. There is nothing artificial or theatrical in his style. But those who hear him for the first time are often surprised at the amount and variety of his

PULPIT AND FORUM

gesticulation. No actor on the stage ever surpassed him in elocution and gesture, and in the varied modulation through the whole gamut, from tears to laughter, of a voice that is at once pleasant and penetrative.

There were other ways in which Mr. Lloyd George was specially qualified to lead the nation during the war. He had been brought up as a Nonconformist. From his boyhood upwards he had listened to the great preachers of the day, both Welsh and English. His own speeches had always a suggestion of the pulpit, just as Mr. Asquith's more grave and elaborate eloquence belonged to the forum. The basis of Mr. Lloyd George's character was religious. The same may be said of the character of the British people. Cicero claimed that it was also the basis of the Roman genius. No one can really move and influence the British race who does not appeal to those primal religious instincts which lie deeper than the differences between church and creed. This is the reason why all attempts to found Labour churches and what is called secular religions are doomed to failure.

Mr. Lloyd George's religious heritage and nurture deepened his influence not only upon the Nonconformist and Puritan element in the people, but upon the whole nation. There is a passage, not in a speech, though the speeches supply many similar ones, but in an article which the Chancellor contributed to the *Methodist Times* of December 17th, 1914, which reveals Mr. Lloyd George's religious imagination, and the source of his power over the national heart and will. He wrote :

“ I recently visited one of the battlefields of France. I saw a village being shelled by the German guns. A prisoner of war was just being brought into the French lines. He was in a motor-car under guard. He was wounded, and looked ill and in pain. A French general with whom I had gone to

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the front went up to the wounded Prussian and told him that he need not worry; he would be taken straight to the hospital, and be looked after as if he were 'one of our own men.'

"It was a curious rivalry under these conditions; for you could hear the whizzle of the German shells and the shuddering crack with which they exploded, dealing out death and destruction in the French trenches close by. We were in sight of a powerful French battery which was preparing to send its deadly messengers into the Prussian ranks a little farther on. I marvelled that this exhibition of goodwill amongst men who were sworn foes should be possible amid such surroundings, until my eyes happened to wander down a lane, when I saw a long row of wagons, each marked with a great cross. Then I knew Who had taught these brave men the lesson of humanity that will gradually, surely, overthrow the reign of hate. Christ had not died in vain."

Mr. Lloyd George's speeches, which had so often a touch of the sermon about them, were a great "uplift," as the Americans say, to the Nonconformist conscience, which during these war times might have become anxious and self-questioning. "There are men," he said at the City Temple on November 10th, 1914, "who maintain that war is not justifiable under any conditions . . . who carry their doctrines so far as to say that you ought not to use a deadly weapon to defend yourself or your homes or your country. I have great respect for them; but I am afraid I shall never be able to attain in this world to that altitude of idealism. But may I just say one or two words about that? It was not the creed of the Puritan Fathers. I maintain it is not the principle of the Christian faith. That deprecates revenge. It deprecates retaliation, but I never heard a saying of the Master's

A FIGHTING SPEECH

which would condemn men for striking a blow for right, justice, or the protection of the weak."

Mr. Lloyd George was not simply an apologist for the war. Atavistic moods of a more positive and fiery character, probably derived from his Silurian ancestry, find expression. He resented the German assumption that the British were a race hopelessly decadent and sick of the palsy—"a non-heroic nation skulking behind our mahogany counters," or "a timorous craven nation trusting to its Fleet," as the Germans called us. All the fighting-man in Mr. Lloyd George was up against such compliments. "I think," he said in the Queen's Hall speech, "they are beginning to find their mistake out already—and there are half a million young men of Britain who have already registered a vow to their King that they will cross the sea and hurl that insult (about the Fleet) to British courage against its perpetrators on the battle-fields of France and Germany. We want half a million more ; and we shall get them."

Through the war-speeches of Mr. Lloyd George breathed a fresh and healthy air drawn from the Welsh mountains and sea. There is a touch of the poet in the statesman, which, it is understood, has blossomed into lay and lyric, in the Welsh tongue. These similitudes or parables added greatly to the charm and literary worth of his political orations. None of these war-speeches reached a higher plane of thought and utterance than that great defence of the Allied cause as against Germany which he delivered at the Queen's Hall, the month after the beginning of the struggle. War brings few compensations in its train, as we have realized more fully than ever on this last and greatest occasion. But from one point of view the war was a godsend to this British statesman. It swept away that mindless party vendetta, in which there seemed at last to be no more honest principle involved than in the family feuds of old Italian cities or the Big-endians and

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the Little-endians of the satire. It gave Mr. George a cause which implied high moral and spiritual issues, and to which he could devote every personal gift with which he had been endowed.

With all its terror and responsibility there is no doubt that Mr. Lloyd George was happy during the long conflict. It absorbed all the energies of his nature. It brought him out of the squalor and pettiness of party strife and set him on an infinitely higher plane of endeavour. It advanced him rapidly from step to step, though perhaps not in the conventional sequence, to the highest place in the state, and it gave him a power and reputation that spread far beyond the limits of the British world. The Welsh nationalist of early days had become the world-statesman and "lang or a' the play was played" he had drawn to himself the eyes and hearts of all who believed in liberal ideas in every civilized nation.

To his unquenchable optimism during the war his own happy disposition greatly contributed. Mr. Lloyd George belongs to a type which seems in external semblance to be very common in Wales. The Albert Hall in London could be filled with an assembly of Lloyd Georges, all greatly similar in personal appearance. It is a wholesome, genial, manly type. In one of its members, born incidentally in a mean street of a dismal English city, Nature kindled a spark of genius, and all the rest followed in due course. Geniality, good-fellowship, a boyish and boisterous sense of humour were prominent attributes of this species, and they served Mr. Lloyd George very well through all the vicissitudes of his political career.

There were occasions during the conference at Genoa when despondency and a sense of failure seemed to have invaded every delegation. One general assembly in the Palace of St. George will be specially remembered by all who were present. Mr. Lloyd George's arrival brought an air of good augury into the meeting, and it does not

A WAR OF EMANCIPATION

exceed the truth to say that on this and other occasions the British statesman by his infectious buoyancy and good-humour saved the life of the conference.

But, to return to the Queen's Hall speech, that may be read as a supreme example of those great orations, if that word be not too formal, which Mr. Lloyd George addressed to the nation and the Empire, regardless of class and party and creed. There are two passages which raise it to a level of the most memorable utterances of a Pitt or a Canning or a Lincoln. Here is one which seems to enshrine the most distinguishing qualities of the speaker and to illustrate the moving spirit of his public life and some of the secrets of his success :

“ I envy you young people your opportunity. They have put up the age limit for the Army, but I am sorry to say I have marched a good many years even beyond that. It is a great opportunity, an opportunity that comes only once in many centuries to the children of man. For most generations sacrifice comes in drab and weariness of spirit. It comes to you to-day, and it comes to-day to us all, in the form of the glow and thrill of a great movement for liberty, that impels millions throughout Europe to the same noble end. It is a great war for the emancipation of Europe from the thralldom of a military caste which has thrown its shadows upon two generations of man, and is now plunging the world into a welter of bloodshed and death. Some have already given their lives. There are some who have given more than their lives ; they have given the lives of those who are dear to them. I honour their courage, and may God be their comfort and their strength. But reward is at hand ; those who have fallen have died consecrated deaths. They have taken their part in the making of a new Europe—a new world.

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I can see signs of its coming in the glare of the battlefield."

The speech ends in a passage of great beauty, with a touch, at the close, almost of Hebraic sublimity :

" May I tell you in a simple parable what I think this war is doing for us ? I know a valley in North Wales, between the mountains and the sea. It is a beautiful valley, snug, comfortable, sheltered by the mountains from all the bitter blasts. But it is very enervating, and I remember how the boys were in the habit of climbing the hill above the village to have a glimpse of the great mountains in the distance, and to be stimulated and freshened by the breezes which came from the hilltops, and by the spectacle of their grandeur. We have been living in a sheltered valley for generations. We have been too comfortable and too indulgent, many, perhaps, too selfish, and the stern hand of Fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the everlasting things that matter for a nation—the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the towering pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven. We shall descend into the valleys again ; but as long as the men and women of this generation last, they will carry in their hearts the image of those mighty peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war."

It is hard to read this passage aloud to oneself without emotion. What must have been the effect of such a speech delivered with the conviction and emphasis, the gesture and voice of a born orator, and amid the hush of a vast assembly, awed by the overshadowing of the greatest trial to which a nation was ever subjected !

CHAPTER V

WEST AND EAST

THE opening of the war found Mr. Lloyd George still Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was not, therefore, directly concerned with military affairs, but he was a member of all the inner councils and committees and cabinets which were in turn entrusted with the supreme direction of the war. He had therefore from the first the fullest possible opportunity of watching the course of events and studying the questions of high strategy. He was thus brought into close contact with the naval and military leaders, and especially with Lord Kitchener, who had succeeded Mr. Asquith as Secretary of State for War when the war began. It is almost amusing to think of a man of Mr. Lloyd George's tradition and temperament being thrown into sudden juxtaposition with a man who was so dissimilar from the Chancellor as to have deserved the by-name of the "sphinx." The famous question in a bogus examination-paper, "Draw a historic parallel between Hannibal and Annie Laurie," scarcely suggests a more abysmal unlikeness than that which parted the frank and mercurial and amiable statesman from the stern, rigid and often inscrutably silent field-marshal.

Many will have regretted that the state of public opinion excluded from the position of War Minister the man who by wisdom and experience and resource seemed to have been providentially designed for it, and appointed thereto a man who had never been fashioned for such a position, and was quite without the power of personal adaptation to it. Lord Haldane, as already stated, was the victim of a foolish and ignorant prejudice, while Lord

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Kitchener had for reasons not easy to analyse been exalted into a popular hero or demigod. It is difficult to speak anything but praise of a man whose very name conjured legions to their feet and who died in the service of his country. But the formula *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* must not be allowed to degenerate into *de mortuis nil nisi bunkum*. Lord Kitchener was obviously to all hearers and observers past his prime. He was out of touch with English life and institutions, having been to a high degree Orientalized by his long service in the East. His military experience, save in his very early youth, during the Franco-German War, had been gained against native races or against that heroic but not very powerful or highly equipped enemy, the South African Boer.

It is on record that Lord Kitchener could never bring himself in the earlier days of the war to appreciate that glorious territorial army which had sprung from the organizing genius of Lord Haldane. We may question whether he ever fully grasped the tremendous revolution which modern weapons, aviation and the rest had wrought in the art of war. Lord French frankly admits that he was at first taken by surprise. He writes *:

“No previous experience, no conclusion I had been able to draw from campaigns in which I had taken part or from a close study of the new conditions in which the war of to-day is waged, had led me to anticipate a war of positions. All my thoughts, all my prospective plans, all my possible alternatives of action, were concentrated upon a war of movement and manœuvre. I knew perfectly well that modern up-to-date inventions would materially influence and modify our previous conceptions as to the employment of the three arms respectively ; but I had not realized that this process would work in so drastic a manner

* “1914,” p. 11-12.

CHARACTER OF LORD KITCHENER

as to render all our preconceived ideas of the method of tactical field-operations comparatively ineffective and useless."

Lord Kitchener seems never to have been able to learn that lesson. He seems actually to have thought that the principles of warfare with "Fuzzy-wuzzy" of the Soudan could be applied to the struggle with the most powerful military nations in Europe.

Lord Kitchener had a remarkable facility in what is known as "holding his face," in veiling his features behind an almost impenetrable mask. The writer remembers an example of this in an otherwise trifling incident that happened during the complimentary lunch given to Lord Kitchener and his staff at Capetown, when they were leaving for England after the end of the Boer War. The luncheon had proceeded for some time when a little girl, instigated thereto by her mother, passed rapidly behind the chairs of the guests, stopped where the Commander-in-Chief sat, imprinted a kiss on his left cheek, and handed him an autograph-book with a pen and ink. The other distinguished generals at the table were greatly amused, but Lord Kitchener, almost without looking round, and exhibiting no sign of any emotion, whether of pleasure or vexation or surprise, took the pen, signed his name, blotted it with the blotting-paper duly provided, and thus closed the incident. It might have been an ordinary part of the formal and rather boring ritual of a public feast. It was remarked how very differently Lord Roberts would have behaved on such an occasion. He would have taken the little girl on his knee, and we should have had pretty pictures of the scene in the illustrated papers.

Kitchener seemed to rule very largely by fear. The positive terror he inspired in his subordinates must have struck many who have seen him conducting a campaign. It was narrated as a feat of almost incredible courage

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when one of his staff-officers, during the long fag-end of the Boer War, found him one day leaning with elbows on the table and head in his hands in a state of great depression, went up to him, and smiting him on the shoulder bade him "Cheer up, old fellow!" The others of Kitchener's entourage would as soon have thought of saluting *le bon Dieu* himself in that familiar fashion. It may be mentioned as a curious symptom of Kitchener's habit of aloofness that he was never known to acknowledge the salute of a private soldier or a junior officer.

Lord French told the House of Lords in June, 1916, that as soon as he was informed of his appointment to the command in France he sought out Lord Kitchener, his old South African comrade, and suggested that they should both go to the Prime Minister to ask that Kitchener should command in France, with French as his Chief of Staff. But Kitchener, who was then about to return to Egypt, would not be persuaded.

One cannot regret the failure of that project. The same traits in Kitchener's character, his autocratic temper, his reluctance to delegate any function to anyone else, his obstinacy, his alternations of inscrutable silence with gushes of confused and almost inarticulate speech, would have made it difficult for other distinguished military men to work with him, and almost impossible to concert plans with such a sensitive ally as France. One cannot imagine Kitchener ever agreeing, even in the interest of efficiency, to serve under the single command of a French generalissimo. Lord French, whose loyalty to his old chief, despite many trials, was touching and chivalrous, writes that Kitchener was not always credited with his great talent for command in the field. But his experience had been gained in totally differing conditions, and Lord Kitchener was too stereotyped in his ideas to adapt himself to the revolution which had taken place in military methods since the days of his early manhood.

A POPULAR IDOL

Things came to such a pass at last that the Government in this country could do neither with nor without Kitchener. The mere threat of resigning was enough for him to obtain what he wanted. The state of British opinion remained so absurd that a government of archangels could not have survived the withdrawal of such a member. Yet it was almost impossible to work with him, and dangerous to criticize him. The reader will remember the fiery fate of a popular newspaper which ventured to call him in question, at a time when he was undoubtedly open to challenge and censure. Had it not been for the magical effect of his name in recruiting new troops, who would probably have come in in any case, the appointment of Lord Kitchener to the War Office would have been about the worst that could have been made. It offended originally against the safe and sound principle that a soldier ought never to be Secretary of State for War—and of all soldiers a man of Kitchener's temperament was perhaps the least suitable.

When once Mr. Lloyd George had entered into the war, he threw his whole energy into it and never looked back. He was determined that the Allies should hold on *jusqu'au bout*, in the popular phrase of the times, the *bout* being a complete and unequivocal victory. He had no sympathy with the ridiculous optimism which in August gave Russia six days at most to march to Berlin, and predicted, for its own obscure reasons, a sudden German *débâcle*. He rather anticipated a bitter and prolonged struggle. That meant enormous waste of life and wealth, and he set himself almost from the outset to devise strategic movements which would achieve all the essential objects at a lower cost.

It is not necessary here to write the history of the first five months of the war. They were unquestionably the most dramatic of all, for at the end of them the Western war went permanently to earth, and for the ensuing four

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years no war ever fought presented fewer scenic and decisive vicissitudes. Enormous loss of life there was, and splendid heroism, but modern trench war is far less interesting than the old warfare of movement with its charges and pitched battles and perpetual change of ground and setting. General French tells us, he was always hoping at the outset for some brilliant outflanking or frontal operation to break the spell of Troglodytic war. "Reports," he writes, "came periodically from our aircraft, from our trenches, and from the French on either flank that the enemy in front of us was 'weakening,' that (phantom!) columns had been seen marching north, etc.—and so the still small voice of truth and reality, trying to speak within one, remained faint and almost unheard. Presently came Maunoury's great effort to turn the German right flank . . . Afterwards we witnessed the stupendous efforts of de Castelnau and Foch; but all ended in the same trench! trench! trench!" And the Field-Marshal goes on to tell us that, as the result of these and other experiences, he formed a military opinion which he never afterwards changed, that, given forces fairly equally matched, you can "bend" but you cannot "break" your enemy's trench line. The war on the Western front became a long and monotonous history of these successive "bendings."

The retreat from Mons, the rally at the Marne—one of the decisive battles of the world—the stubborn contest along the Aisne, the race towards the sea, the tremendous struggle to the east of Ypres, in which the tenacity of Lord French and his troops saved the ports, and by so doing probably saved the British Empire: these briefly were the events which unrolled themselves in the West down to the end of the year. Mr. Lloyd George watched these events and formed his own opinions. Mr. Winston Churchill has given us a glimpse of the Chancellor at a very dark hour at the end of August, after the fall of Namur and the beginning of the British retreat:

MR. CHURCHILL'S TRIBUTE

" I had not seen the Chancellor of the Exchequer, except at Cabinets, since the fateful Sunday before the war. I had been buried in the Admiralty, and he in the Treasury. I sustained vague general impressions of a tremendous financial crisis—panic, bankruptcies, suspension of the Bank Act, moratoriums, paper money—like a distant tumult. I realized that he, aided by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Reading, was riding the storm and regaining effective control of events. But I did not attempt to follow and appreciate the remarkable sequence of decisions by which an unprecedented, unimaginable situation was met. Now, however, with this fateful news, I felt intensely the need of contact with him, and I wanted to know how it would strike him and how he would face it. So I walked across the Horse Guards Parade and made my way to the tunnel entrance of the Treasury Board Room. It must have been about 10 o'clock in the morning, and, as I opened the door, I saw the room was crowded. One of that endless series of conferences with all the great business and financial authorities of Britain, by means of which the corner was turned, was in progress. He saw me at once ; I beckoned with my finger and he came out. We went into a little room scarce bigger than a cupboard which adjoined, and I told him what had happened. I was relieved and overjoyed at his response. He was once again the Lloyd George of Agadir. Not since the morning of the Mansion House speech, three years before, had I seen him so strong and resolute for our country, or so sure of its might."

Though Mr. Lloyd George's official duties were not directly concerned with the conduct of the war, we may be sure there was no more attentive observer than he of

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the course of events during the first few months. His combined gifts of imagination and common-sense—"inspired common-sense" this combination has been called—qualified him to form views on high strategy which must always command respect. Strategy involves political and psychological considerations. It is the province of the statesman even more than of the soldier, and Mr. Lloyd George was not likely to be deterred from holding and uttering views on the conduct of the war by any arguments drawn from the shoemaker and his last.

It was not fully understood in England as the year drew to its close what a stupendous work had been achieved since August. True, the first Russian impulse which had helped so greatly, if indirectly, to the victory of the Marne had spent itself. Hindenburg had delivered his Thor-like hammer-strokes, and Russia was being gradually thrown back on to the defensive. But it is impossible to overestimate what had been accomplished on the Western front and on the sea. Even now it is difficult to account entirely on other than providential grounds for the repulse of the Germans in their bid for the Channel ports. There we were fighting for the right of England, and the British Empire, to live. "The stakes for which we were playing at the great battle of Ypres," wrote the British Commander-in-Chief whose name will always be splendidly linked with that crowning mercy, "were nothing less than the safety, indeed the very existence, of the British Empire."

To the astonishing tenacity and heroism of the British soldier it is above all else due that the German did not pass. But it is still inexplicable why he failed sooner to reinforce his right flank at a time when no available resistance would have prevented him from carrying the western terminal of his entrenchments as far south as Dieppe. The whole coast of the Pas-de-Calais, with the ports of Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk, would then have

SUCSESSES FOR OUR ARMS

been in his power. England still remembers the "years of fear" when Napoleon organized his invasion of England from Boulogne. With the Germans there the danger would have been much greater. As *points d'appui* for the submarine and the aeroplane these ports would have been invaluable to the enemy. It is indeed questionable whether we could have maintained a steady transport of men and materials to France with these French ports in hostile possession. The stabilization of a British line in France protecting the ports and holding firm, with unimportant vicissitudes, against four years' almost incessant testing and probing was the greatest feat of war accomplished down to Christmas, 1914.

And this was not the only achievement. The German flag was swept clean off the waters of the world by operations which culminated in the Battle of the Falkland Islands. German ships left at large to prey on commerce were hunted down. Our troops passed to the Continent almost as safely and securely as in times of peace. Our sea communications were free and open, and there seemed good reason to believe we should be able to cope with the worst menace of the submarine. The rebellion in South Africa, a most disquieting incident, was quelled without the necessity of diverting any Australian or New Zealand troops to that part of the Empire. In addition, our Fleets were being rapidly reinforced, and the expansion of our armies had already proceeded sufficiently to secure us against the proud foot of a conqueror being planted on our own soil.

We need not wonder that, as December passed, "a sense of indescribable relief," in Mr. Churchill's words, "stole over the Admiralty. . . . A feeling of profound thankfulness filled our hearts as this first Christmas of the war approached; and of absolute confidence in final victory."

There was much to be thankful for, but the view

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ahead was shrouded in doubt and darkness. We had gained few advantages in the field of diplomacy since the war began, and little light was coming in "by Eastern windows." The British democracy knew little or nothing of our relations during these months with the Balkan States. Not till long after did it realize that M. Venizelos, then Prime Minister of Greece, had, with the consent of King Constantine, placed at the disposal of the Entente, and in particular of Great Britain, the entire naval and military resources of Greece. The minds of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill, who were closely agreed at this time on questions of politics and war, were attracted by this offer, Mr. Lloyd George's feelings being once more enlisted on the side of a small nation. Might it not be possible to re-form the old Balkan confederation of Christian states with its point turned against the Central Powers, and against Turkey if that State, as seemed more and more likely, lent itself to Germanic purposes?

But the foreign policy of our government in these months was determined by the desire and hope of avoiding war with Turkey. It was feared that too close a comradeship with Greece might arouse Russian suspicions on the score of Constantinople, and also antagonize Bulgaria, whose future policy was highly speculative. So we continued to walk and talk with Turkey, and to repeat our somewhat infatuated promises about maintaining Turkey's integrity if she would only not join the Germans. Yet all the while the German cruisers *Goeben* and *Breslau* were lying fully armed and manned at Constantinople, quite able and ready at any moment to bring Turkey into the war. As all the world now knows, the turkey and the Prussian eagle had been committed to one another since August 2nd, when a firm and quite unambiguous alliance had been concluded between the two birds. So we fell between two stools. We failed to secure Turkish neutrality, and we missed the chance of welding together

THE BALKAN MUDDLE

Servians, Greeks, Montenegrins, Rumanians, perhaps even Bulgarians, into an armed confederation with its strength thrown wholly on the Allied side.

The ultimate results of this irresolution, gathered in later, were terrible enough. Serbia was devastated with fire and sword. Greece became the prey of internal feuds and incapable of any service for freedom and right. Bulgaria, impressed with Allied futility, threw her lot in with Germany and Turkey, and Rumania, another small nation that trusted us in vain, suffered the tragic fate of Serbia.

Meanwhile the position on the Western front, though it meant safety for the Channel harbours, meant also deadlock and stalemate, with a prospect of a long continuance of these conditions.

The situation in December, 1914, or January, 1915, was very accurately described in the First Report of the Dardanelles Commission.* It helps us to realize the state of things around which Mr. Lloyd George let his mind and imagination play during the first Christmas-time of the war :

“ At that time the rival armies in the Western theatre of war had reached a state of deadlock. The desperate attempts made by the Germans on the British position at Ypres had been repulsed with great losses to the enemy. It seemed tolerably clear that no attempts to break through the French and British lines could prove successful. On the other hand, the Allies were not in sufficiently superior strength to justify any hope that they would speedily break through the German lines. In the Eastern theatre of war, the Austrians had sustained some serious defeats. But the Russian position, though for the moment satisfactory, was in reality somewhat pre-

* Cd. 8490, p. 19.

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carious, owing to a lack of munitions and inadequate railway communications, both being defects which could not be speedily corrected. In Servia the position was very menacing. The attitude likely to be assumed by Bulgaria was the dominating factor in the Balkan Peninsula.

"All attempts to secure the military co-operation of the Balkan States had failed. 'Diplomacy,' as Lord Grey explained to us, 'was perfectly useless without military success.' Bulgaria was still neutral, but the proclivities of its rulers were well known. It was thought that a decisive military success on the part of the Allies would prove the most effective method for securing the continued maintenance of its neutrality. Italy was still neutral. It was under such circumstances that the British Government had to consider in what direction a blow could most effectively be delivered, in order at one and the same time to relieve the pressure on Russia and to deter Bulgaria from active adherence to the cause of the Central Powers."

It was from data of this kind that the two opposing schools of thought arose with regard to the conduct of the war. These have been conveniently termed the "Westerners" and "Easterners." The former held that the Allied forces must be concentrated against the Germans along the Belgian and French fronts, "side-shows" being as far as possible avoided. The Easterners were impressed with the "stalemate" which before the end of 1914 had established itself along this immense trench-line from the Belgian coast to Switzerland, and leaned strongly to some outflanking enterprise, either in the Baltic or the Near East, which would effect a diversion of German forces from the West and lead to an earlier and less costly conclusion of the war.

MEMORANDUM TO THE WAR COUNCIL

Mr. Lloyd George early made up his mind between these two views. No other decision was likely. His Celtic temperament, with its vivid imagination and its eager and impulsive activity, was certain to be against mere "stonewalling," and "the hurling of our manhood," in Mr. Churchill's words, "against sandbags, wire and concrete in frontal attack upon the German fortified lines in France." From thought to action is with Mr. Lloyd George a quick and single stride. He was not to be restrained by any undue deference to professional military opinion. In fact his estimate of military intelligence, with one or two exceptions, seems to have declined from the early days of the war. He may have begun to feel the first stirrings of Lord Chatham's conviction that he himself could save his country and that nobody else could.

At any rate, on New Year's Day of the black year, 1915, he sent in to the Committee of Imperial Defence, or rather the War Council, which had then succeeded to the Committee's functions, a memorandum on the conduct of the war in which he formally submitted the policy of Easternism to that high and responsible authority. It is curious to notice what a vast amount of proposing and arguing went on in these days in official circles, of which the perplexed and patient people knew nothing. It was impossible to publish memoranda of this sort for the information of the enemy. Yet the loss of publicity had its evils. If this paper had been duly published in the *Times* of January 2nd, the consequences of announcing our intentions to the world in advance would have been disastrous. But Mr. Lloyd George would certainly have had "a good Press," and the nation's views on strategy would have been greatly clarified.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer began by pointing out the difference between our old regular and our new

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armies. The professional soldier went to the wars as to his day's work. There were no tears and agonies at his departure, and no intense and anxious scrutiny of the use to which he was put and the treatment he received while engaged on a campaign. The present writer vividly remembers an example of this difference in the early days of the war. A party of regular troops and of recruits for the new army were entraining at midnight at a station in the Midlands. The professional warrior was sent off with as much cheerfulness and sangfroid as if he were starting for a football match, while the departure of the civilian recruits was unmingled tragedy. Mr. Lloyd George's point was that these new troops especially, whose fortunes are so intensely and individually watched, must not be wasted on operations which would "break the stoutest hearts."

It seems strange that the Chancellor should so soon have grasped the full character of that warfare of position which had just set in at Christmas, 1914. He pictures the enormous expenditure in life that may go to the capture of half a mile of mud and swamp, which the next day may be recaptured by the enemy. He especially mentions the battles of Dixmude and Roulers as useless lavishings of life and material.

He has no belief in the war being brought to an end on these lines. Germany is one of the richest and most resourceful countries in the world, and to bring her down by mere attrition and exhaustion may be a process of some ten years' duration. Were the Allies to be confined simply to countering German designs? Could they not have a policy of their own which would knock away some of the German "props" and compel the enemy to fight in quarters and under conditions inconvenient to himself?

Mr. Lloyd George, whose views are thus very loosely paraphrased, was not content with general statements. He made a definite proposal garnished with the appro-

A SUGGESTED DIVERSION

priate figures. Briefly stated, we were to land a great army at Salonica or on the Dalmatian coast which would attract the Christian nations of the Balkan Peninsula to our side, and with these would attack Austria along the line of the Danube. Such an expedition not only would be a severe menace in itself to the Central Powers, but would indirectly open the road for a Russian invasion of Silesia farther north and weaken the stolid Teutonic pressure in the West. The Chancellor also anticipated that such operations would at once attract the interest of Italy, who might step from her position of neutrality and join the Allied cause.

Mr. Lloyd George's figures are a little difficult at first sight. He seems to have calculated that our new armies would amount to 700,000 men at the end of the first quarter of 1915. With 300,000 already in France, we should thus have a force of 1,000,000, of whom 400,000 could be left in France, the remaining 600,000 being available for the expedition in the Near East. Altogether he estimated that with Greeks, Servians, Montenegrins, and Rumanians a maximum force of 1,400,000 might be available for the new stroke.

But this was not all. The Turks were understood at this time to be organizing an attack upon the Suez Canal and Egypt. Part of Mr. Lloyd George's scheme was to land a force much farther north, somewhere on the coast of Syria, and thus intercept these Turkish troops on the Canal and subjugate Syria.

It subsequently appeared that M. Briand, Mr. Lloyd George's French friend and sympathizer, made a similar suggestion at the same time, when a member of M. Viviani's government. According to his own statement in 1919, the French were to take part along with the English in this attack upon the Austrian Empire. M. Briand's scheme was favourably received in principle, but ultimately rejected at French headquarters.

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Mr. Lloyd George's, though not formally or finally turned down, seems to have died of neglect. It is true the Dardanelles Commission Report, dealing with the state of things existing at the fateful meeting of the War Council on January 13th, 1915, says: "We do not think it necessary, neither, so long as the war lasts, would it be at all advisable, to deal in a report intended for publication with the alternative projects which at the time came under the consideration of the government. It will suffice to say that for various reasons, some political and others either naval or military, all, save the proposal to make an attempt on the Dardanelles, were rejected." But, as late as January 9th, we find the War Office sending to the Commander-in-Chief a memorandum on "the possibility of employing British forces in a different theatre than that in which they are now used," and asking that "certain of the possible projects for pressing the war in other theatres should be carefully studied during the next few weeks."

The War Council seems at this time to have been generally favourable to the idea of turning the flank of the Central Powers. The memorandum of January 9th intimates that their conclusion for the present was that "the main theatre of operations for British forces should be alongside the French army, and that this should continue as long as France was liable to successful invasion and required armed support." But, the memorandum continued, "it was thought that, after another failure by Germany to force the lines of defence held by the French army and yours, the military situation in France and Flanders might conceivably develop into one of stalemate, in which it would be impossible for German forces to break through into France, while at the same time the German defences would be impassable for offensive movements of the Allies without great loss of life and the expenditure of more ammunition than

LORD KITCHENER AS DICTATOR

could be provided. In these circumstances it was considered desirable to find some other theatre where such obstructions to advance would be less pronounced, and from where operations against the enemy might lead to more decisive results."

It may be doubted whether any adequate discussion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's project was available in those days. Nearly all the great military figures had left their niches in the General Staff and Army Council and gone to France to serve their country there. In their place were less distinguished and authoritative soldiers who would never have dreamed of offering any advice to Lord Kitchener, even if that terrifying person had been capable of requesting and accepting advice from any subordinate.

Lord Kitchener himself dominated without leading or enlightening strategic counsel. Mr. Churchill, dealing with these days, says that when Lord Kitchener gave a decision it was invariably accepted as final, and that he was never overruled by the War Council or the Cabinet in any military matter, great or small. "He sought to manage the Great War by the same sort of personal control that he had used with so much success in the command of the tiny Nile Expedition." * This unlimited autocracy might have acted well enough if Lord Kitchener had been a Julius Cæsar or a Napoleon Bonaparte. At his best he was never comparable with those master-spirits, and in these days he had greatly declined from his best.

Too proud and imperious to devolve any duty upon a subordinate, he drew to himself a score of responsibilities, any one of which would probably have been sufficient burden for him. The result was disastrous. We hear of his contradictory decisions. On this momentous question of East and West he seems to have been incapable of any clear thinking or any firm decision. Lord Kitchener,

* Churchill, "The World Crisis, 1915," p. 175.

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we read, was "left to face the rushing, swirling torrent of events with no rock of clear, well-thought-out doctrine and calculation at his back."* He was weighted on the one hand with the obvious and unimaginative problem presented by the mud and blood struggle on the West, and he seems at times to have been almost unduly apprehensive of invasion. On the other his special experience and his own predilection must have disposed him in favour of a diversion in the East. These forces seem to have been so exactly equal and opposite that like the knot in the centre of a tug-of-war rope, pulled diversely in the same manner, Lord Kitchener was left in a state of stationary but tremulous indecision. From these dilemmas the Secretary of State would find relief in his hobbies. The writer was once told by an antique dealer in the West End of London, how the War Secretary would, *in ipso discrimine rerum*, spend hours in his shop poring over bric-à-brac for the adorning of his house at Broome.

So it is not surprising to learn that Mr. Lloyd George's project was never adequately considered. We drifted into other designs, less defensible and more speculative. It is indeed ominous that on the day after the presentation of the Chancellor's memorandum the Gallipoli enterprise entered on its first practical phase, though Mr. Churchill had suggested an attack on the peninsula as early as the War Council which met on November 25th.

On January 2nd came the telegram from the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg which brought the idea within practical politics. This telegram represented that the Russians were in a tight corner in the Caucasus, and expressed a hope, on behalf of the Russian Government, that a demonstration should be made elsewhere against the Turks, in order to relieve this pressure. On the next day (January 3rd) a reply was sent to the Ambassador,

* *Ib.*, p. 174.

THE DARDANELLES EXPEDITION

authorizing him to assure the Russian Government that a demonstration would be made against the Turks, but stating it was feared that any such action would be unlikely to affect seriously the withdrawal of enemy troops in the Caucasus.*

From that moment we were committed to an undertaking which, with a different military inspiration at the War Office, might have succeeded, and which, though it ended in failure and disaster and was unconscionably expensive in life and treasure, did achieve some results not wholly unimportant. Mr. Lloyd George is jointly and officially responsible for that ill-starred expedition, but we must in fairness remember that it was not his own conception, though he had to acquiesce in it, and that the diversion in the East he favoured was indicated quite clearly in the memorandum of January 1st. It is a frailty of the human mind to take a joy in speculating what might have been the course of events if something had or had not happened. Mr. Lloyd George's plan of campaign might, like any other plan, have failed, but it offered a much more rational prospect of success than any rival projects, and looking back on what actually occurred one can only regret that it was not tried.

It must have been clear to the most "bisson conspectuities" in those days that Germany would before long turn her attention to the Balkan Peninsula. When Turkey entered the war on her side and Bulgaria followed later, she had everything to gain from opening the "corridor" from Berlin to the Bosphorus and beyond. Germany would first settle her controversy with Russia in Poland and Galicia, and would then concentrate all available forces against the devoted little kingdom of Serbia, where the spark of the world conflagration had first been kindled. Mr. Lloyd George, always at heart the child of a small nation, was under no delusion about the fate of Serbia

* "Report of the Dardanelles Commission" (cd. 8490), p. 15.

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unless the Allied Powers made an effectual diversion in her favour.

In January, 1915, Germany was reported to be preparing for her raid southwards, and at Mr. Lloyd George's suggestion a note was sent to Greece and Rumania urging those countries to go to the help of their threatened neighbour. But the Chancellor was not content with the suggestion of vicarious sacrifice. He continued to keep the fortunes of Servia before the War Council, and in the middle of January persuaded them to offer an army corps to Greece if she would join the Allies. Mr. Lloyd George's great Balkan scheme not having been adopted, it might still be possible to do something effectual on a smaller scale. But France had to be brought in, and France, with the invader covering large areas of her fair territory, had to think first of her own troubles. During the resulting delay, M. Venizelos replied to the Allied note asking help for Servia, and laid down the conditions on which it could be given. Bulgaria—Greece's ever-present rival—must come into the war on the Allied side, or Rumania must come in and Bulgaria be held neutral. If Bulgaria came in, Greece would withdraw her objection to Servia's surrender of part of Macedonia to that state.

Then followed one of those inter-Allied conferences in Paris which Mr. Lloyd George, who always believed in direct and personal confabulation, so often proposed during the war. There by his earnest advocacy he persuaded the French to send aid to a little people threatened with a fate which had overtaken themselves. A French division was offered, and two British were to go with it. The policy was not to trouble about Bulgaria or Rumania for the moment, but simply to join hands with Greece in order to rescue Servia before the time of day was too late. Mr. Harold Spender thinks that this expedition would probably have forestalled and averted that ill-starred

THE CAMPAIGN OPENS

Dardanelles-Gallipoli attack which opened on February 25th. We might thus have been saved a disaster more costly in blood and prestige than any other in our military annals.

But this hopeful enterprise was not to be. We were relying upon a state and government whose politics could scarcely be predicted from day to day. Everything was ready. Even Russia had promised 10,000 men to back the effort. Then suddenly came the news from M. Venizelos, whose position was not then a happy one, that Greece had decided not to join the Allies in the war. The conditions she had specified on January 26th had not been realized. Bulgaria would promise neither alliance nor neutrality. Rumania was still undecided which horse to back, and Greece feared a repetition of the terrific sacrifices she had had to make in the second Balkan War. She seems to have placed little reliance on the strong right hand of the Allied Powers in holding off a Bulgarian raid westwards into Macedonia and southwards to Kavalla.

There was nothing any longer to prevent the opening of operations at the Dardanelles, and on February 25 the terrific and spectacular bombardment opened with fair prospects of success. The lesson was not lost on the Royal government of Greece, which, with a sublime disregard for consistency, offered on March 6th the entire Greek fleet and one division of troops for service at the Dardanelles.

But Greece was too late. The Allies had in the meantime formed other plans. Russia, whose arms were at this time successful, leaned towards Bulgaria rather than Greece, whose designs on Constantinople, that ancient Greek metropolis, were always to be suspected. Bulgaria was also impressed with the display of fireworks at the Dardanelles, and was prepared to trim her course in exact accordance with the more favourable breeze.

Servia was for the time being respited, but no one

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knew better than Mr. Lloyd George that her execution was only postponed. He turned to the possibility of rebuilding the old Balkan Federation on a basis of mutual concession. Serbia's part in the arrangement was to accept at the end of the war Bosnia and Herzegovina for herself, and hand over to Bulgaria the debatable portion of Macedonia which the Allies were in the meantime to hold. Well would it have been for Serbia to accept these terms. She might have saved herself the most appalling calamity that has ever befallen a civilized state. But she was lulled into a false sense of security. She had already faced and foiled the forces of the Central Powers, and the danger might seem to have permanently receded. Serbia was not disposed to make the necessary sacrifices, if sacrifices they were, and was therefore in some degree responsible for the fate that overtook her.

Throughout all these events Mr. Lloyd George had favoured the policy of meeting any Greek advances and endeavouring to co-operate with the Greek Government, so long as that government was a free and constitutional expression of the national will. But when Constantine began his intrigues, grasping firmly with one hand the mailed fist of his kinsman, the German Emperor, and with the other gesticulating in the friendliest way to the Allies, Mr. Lloyd George was not deceived. Despite his good-humour and tolerance, a facile credulity is not among Mr. Lloyd George's frailties. "*Wer sich grün macht, den fressen die Ziegen*" ("Who makes himself green will be eaten by the goats") was a favourite saying of Prince Bismarck, and the British statesman would fully endorse the maxim.

Thus, when Constantine was aspiring to play the Prussian monarch on his little stage and at the same time making offers of armed assistance to the Allies, he was naturally suspect and by none more so than by Mr. Lloyd George. The Allies were willing at any time to admit

FATAL BLUNDERS

a liberal and constitutional Greece to their counsels, but they would have no dealings with a reactionary government, whose head was known to be engaged in continuous intrigue with the arch-enemy of freedom and constitutional rule. This attitude was justified when, two years later, M. Venizelos re-established democratic government in Greece, when Constantine went into well-merited exile, and Greece, the immemorial champion of liberty, stood for good and all by the side of the Powers who were fighting for freedom and public right.

Mr. Lloyd George, despite his chivalrous efforts on her behalf, was to witness the cruel martyrdom of Servia. So sure was his prevision of that disaster that four months before the blow fell we find him urging his colleagues to reconsider the Gallipoli adventure, which was luring us into still deeper sloughs, and to transfer our forces to the Balkans while we might still avert the threatened calamity.

On more than one occasion it would have been possible to withdraw from the Dardanelles without any severe loss of prestige. It was indeed part of the original plan of a purely naval attack that if the ships failed to force the passage we could reconsider the whole adventure. But even before the first bombardment took place it had been decided at a meeting of the War Council (February 16th) to mass troops in the neighbourhood of the Dardanelles, in readiness should their assistance be required. It was decided, with Lord Kitchener's full concurrence, that the 29th Division should be sent out at once. Royal Marine battalions had already been dispatched, and a force was to be expedited from Egypt. These movements of troops announced to the world, not excluding the Turks and the Germans, that land forces were to co-operate with the ships in order to force a way to Constantinople.

The 29th Division of regular troops was to have started to the scene of operations on the 22nd. On the 20th, Colonel Fitzgerald, Lord Kitchener's personal military

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secretary, called on the Admiralty to say that it had been decided that the division was not to go. It is not surprising that "an acute difference of opinion," in the language of the Report, should have arisen between the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War. Mr. Churchill had reason to be vexed. He tells us that great pressure had been brought to bear on Lord Kitchener from General Headquarters not to divert the 29th Division from France. "The use of the 29th Division became a cardinal issue between what were beginning to be called in our secret circles the Western and the Eastern policies. Lord Kitchener became the prey of these contending opinions and forces, and he was plunged in a state of most painful indecision between them."

On March 5th General Birdwood, who had been sent from Egypt to report on the situation at the Dardanelles, wired to Lord Kitchener that he was "very doubtful if the Navy can force the passage unassisted. In any event the forcing of the passage must take a considerable time."

On the 10th, influenced, it may be, by this message, Lord Kitchener changed his mind once more, and again authorized the dispatch of the division. Thus three precious weeks were lost. The transports, which might have got away on February 22nd, did not leave till March 16th. This delay enabled the Turko-German forces time to strengthen enormously the defences of Gallipoli, so that when the time for the land attacks came these had to encounter an impregnable stronghold. The comment of the very judicial and moderate Report of the Dardanelles Commissioners was certainly justified:

"From the time the decision of February 16th was taken there were really only two alternatives which were thoroughly defensible. One was to accept the view that by reason of our existing commitments

DELAYS AND INDECISION

elsewhere an adequate force could not be made available for expeditionary action in the Eastern Mediterranean ; to face the possible loss of prestige which would have been involved in an acknowledgment of partial failure, and to have fallen back on the original plan of abandoning the naval attack on the Dardanelles when once it became apparent that military operations on a large scale would be necessary. The other was to have boldly faced the risks which would have been involved elsewhere and at once to have made a determined effort to force the passage of the Dardanelles by a rapid and well-organized combined attack in great strength. Unfortunately, the government adopted neither of these courses. Time, as Mr. Asquith truly said to us, was all-important. Yet for at least three weeks the government vacillated and came to no definite decision in one sense or the other. The natural result ensued. The favourable moment for action was allowed to lapse. Time was given to the Turks, with the help of German officers, to strengthen their position so that eventually the opposition to be encountered became of a far more formidable character than was originally to be anticipated. Moreover, even when the decision was taken, it was by no means thorough. . . . We think that Mr. Churchill was quite justified in attaching the utmost importance to the delays which occurred in dispatching the 29th Division and the Territorial Division from this country." *

In war the method of publicly announcing what you are going to do, and doing it some weeks later when the enemy has had time to counter your stroke, is not commendable. Yet it was the principle on which we seemed to act at the Dardanelles. Indecision was our ruin,

* Cd. 8490.

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and indecision was enthroned in the British War Office. Mr. Churchill tells how he appealed to Mr. Asquith, Prime Minister, against Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, on the delay in dispatching the indispensable division. On this subject Mr. Asquith agreed with Mr. Churchill, and so did the whole Council with the exception of Lord Kitchener. Yet Lord Kitchener prevailed. "I urged the Prime Minister to make his authority effective, and to insist upon the dispatch of the 29th Division to Lemnos or Alexandria. I felt at that moment in an intense way a foreboding of disaster. I knew it was a turning-point in the struggle, as surely as I know now that the consequences are graven on the monuments of history. The Prime Minister did not feel that anything more could be done. He had done his best to persuade Lord Kitchener. He could not overrule him or face his resignation on a question like this, for the whole military opinion of the General Staff and of the French authorities would be upon his side."

This passage directs a stream of X-rays on to the ailing-spot in our national organization for war. Even the Prime Minister himself could scarcely call his soul his own under the paralysing despotism established at the War Office. This pistol-argument of resignation was sufficient to counter any design not favoured by Lord Kitchener. Ministers were simply tenants-at-will of their high offices, and it became in the end one of the compelling reasons for establishing a coalition government that His Majesty's Ministers might no longer be subject to this species of intimidation.

In July, after the failure of the military attack on the ramparts of Gallipoli, we might again have "cut our losses" and carried our forces where they could have been far more usefully employed. But the suggestion made by Mr. Lloyd George was not adopted. It was decreed that we should drink to the dregs the cup of humiliation

THE MARTYRDOM OF SERVIA

and failure offered us in the Dardanelles adventure. By this time the Chancellor of the Exchequer had become the first Minister of Munitions, and his entire energies were engaged in converting our industrial system into one vast arsenal. He had little time for questions of high strategy. But we know that on the Dardanelles Committee, which replaced the War Council in June, 1915, he again and again urged the necessity of getting through to Constantinople with as little delay as possible, so that our forces might be freed for the help of Servia, Greece and Rumania.

We are over-running our chronology, but the logic of events carries us along to October, and to the German invasion of Servia, an event accompanied with every circumstance of ruthless cruelty. England, who, under happier counsels, might have sheltered this little heroic people, felt a loss of self-esteem in her own failure, and this sense of humiliation deepened when Rumania was shattered a year later on the same fiery anvil. It looked as though Britain's right arm was shortened and could no longer reach to the defence of our less powerful friends and allies. The disaster to Servia, by opening to the Germans an uninterrupted highway to Constantinople and beyond, finally compelled our evacuation of Gallipoli. Thus ended what must be described, despite all possible counter-claims of advantage, the largest blunder in our entire military history. The postponement of the Bulgarian entrance into the war, and the holding-up for nine months of 300,000 Turkish soldiers who might have been employed elsewhere, were benefits dearly purchased by 100,000 battle casualties, and an incalculable loss of prestige, besides a large sacrifice in ships and materials of war and the conquest and devastation of two little countries which naturally looked to us for protection.

On a moderate view of probabilities it would have been better if Mr. Lloyd George's military programme suggested

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on the first day of 1915 had been adopted instead. That was the product of a judgment more tranquil and better-balanced than the stormier counsels to which we owed this impulsive and quixotic attempt to achieve the impossible.

Mr. Lloyd George had only a formal and official responsibility for the Dardanelles campaign. He had no paternal relationship whatever to it. We are still out-pacing the constable, but it is convenient to record at this point that the end of 1915 marked a very distinctive stage in Mr. Lloyd George's career, and brought great political changes. Mr. Lloyd George had some right to criticize the conduct of the war, and the highly unsatisfactory situation which faced the British people at the close of 1915. He himself had no great cause for self-reproach. He had done more than any man, as we shall see, to retrieve our position with regard to shells and guns. Disasters, which he had foreseen, and against which he had vainly wished to provide, had duly and painfully happened. These things became generally known. The nation began to look to Mr. Lloyd George for wiser and stronger leadership. There was no need for intrigue or for a revolutionary *coup d'état*. Mr. Lloyd George was silently elected to the first place before he or his friends had made any demand for a change.

His speech to the House of Commons on December 20th, 1915, contained a passage which impressed its immediate hearers, as well as its readers in the morrow's newspapers. Mr. Lloyd George was alluding particularly to the contract with labour in regard to munitions. But his words had, and were intended to have, a much wider application :

“ I wonder whether it will not be too late ? Ah ! fatal words of this war. Too late in moving here ! Too late in arriving there ! Too late in coming to this decision ! Too late in starting with enterprises !

TOO LATE !

Too late in preparing ! In this war the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of 'Too Late' ; and unless we quicken our movements, damnation will fall on the sacred cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed."

It was a speech of tremendous emphasis, of Mænadic gesticulation. No one who was present will ever forget the apostolic blow on the table which accompanied the word "damnation." "Let us cast aside," he concluded, "the fond illusion that you can win victory by an elaborate pretence that you are doing so. Let us fling to one side rivalries and jealousies, trade, professional and political. Let us be one people—one in aim, one in action, one in resolution—to win the most sacred cause ever entrusted to a great nation."

No other public man in England was speaking quite in this prophetic strain, at once voicing the thoughts of the people, and uplifting its spirit and purpose. There was much virtue in these spoken appeals to what was best in the national character, but Mr. Lloyd George had just shown that he was not simply a talker but a doer. All through these distressing events, relieved only by the entrance of Italy into the war, the conquest of German South-West Africa, and the continued holdfast of our line in France, Mr. Lloyd George had been engaged in the munition campaign to which we must now retrace our steps.

CHAPTER VI

SHELLS AND GUNS

THE story of the munitions during the first ten months of the war is not pleasant to relate. During all that period statesmen and soldiers in this country, despite the formation of committees and laudable efforts of various kinds, never succeeded in realizing the character of the war in France. They seemed unable to shake off the misconceptions and preconceptions which dated from the days of peace. Our experience had been drawn mainly from the South African War, which, compared with the European struggle on which we had entered, was a pleasant and leisurely *fête champêtre*. The Russo-Japanese War might have afforded lessons of a more relevant kind. But we seemed to have learnt little or nothing even from that campaign.

Perhaps the most serious of our pre-war conclusions was that in favour of shrapnel as against high explosives for the guns of our field and horse artillery. Shrapnel, as primarily the man-killing weapon to be used against troops in the open, was the right thing in the campaign against "Fuzzy-wuzzy" of the Soudan or in the cross-country warfare of the South African veld. It is chiefly useful in defence, but is also effective in offensive operations for sweeping communication trenches, for repelling counter-attacks, and even for cutting through wire entanglements. But against permanent trenches, earthworks, buildings, constructed defences, machine-gun emplacements, and the like, it is of little use. Against these more stubborn obstacles high explosive is required. But this was not understood by the Ordnance Board of the

SHORTAGE OF AMMUNITION

War Office, which entered the war in full reliance on the efficacy of shrapnel. Lord French had a heart-breaking task to convince the home authorities of the necessity for a much larger proportion of high explosive not simply for guns of heavier calibre but for the field and horse artillery.

The serious thing in this concentration on shrapnel was that the transference to the manufacture of high explosive was by no means simple. The construction of the two species of shell differs very greatly, and we had little experience in the manufacture of the high explosive. And not only were the shells of the wrong sort but the delivery even of these fell far short of the requirement. Lord French tells us that in September, 1914, the 18-pounders were firing on an average 14 rounds a day, whilst the receipts were barely seven. The 60-pounder guns and the 4.5-inch howitzers fired over 40 rounds per day against eight or nine rounds at most received. Lord French notified the home officials of this rapid depletion of reserves. On October 29th the War Office was officially told that the state of the ammunition supply had necessitated an order restricting the expenditure to 20 rounds per gun daily, and that a further restriction to 10 rounds would be necessary if the supply did not improve. "This," writes Lord French, "was during the most desperate period of the First Battle of Ypres, when the average daily expenditure of 18-pounder ammunition had amounted to 81 rounds per gun."* On December 31st a demand for a much larger proportion of high explosives was made. Of 50 rounds per day for horse and field artillery guns respectively, 25 were to be of this class of shell. Out of 40 rounds for 4.5-inch howitzer, 35 were to be high explosives. All the 6-inch howitzer, 6-inch gun and 9.2-inch howitzer ammunition was to be of the same sort. For the 60-pounders and 4.7-inch guns, 15 out of 25 rounds per day were to be high explosive.

* "1914," Lord French, p. 349.

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This output was to be continued even when active operations were not proceeding, so as to ensure an adequate reserve. On January 19th the War Office replied declining to work up to more than 20 rounds a day, and refused the request for 50 per cent. of high explosives. Lord French describes this as an "amazing attitude at a most critical time," and he began at once to consider the means by which the Government and the British people in general might be "advised of the deplorable apathy which, if long continued, meant the destruction of our Army."*

Colonel Repington reveals to us how this request for 50 per cent. of high explosives made by the men who were bearing the brunt of things in France was received by the head of the War Office in England. Sir Archibald Murray, we are told, was haled over to London to see Lord Kitchener on this subject, and was roundly abused for it. Colonel Repington goes on to add a particular which, if we did not feel that it was characteristic of Lord Kitchener, would be quite incredible. "Murray told me at the time that Lord Kitchener had informed him that he was not fit to be a General Staff Officer, and that the British Army ought to be able to take positions without artillery. He even instanced the Atbara as a precedent, proving himself to be totally unacquainted with the lessons of the campaign. The request for 50 per cent. of H.E. was refused."†

The British Army in France was as valorous as any that ever marched to war, but it was left to our Secretary of State to suggest that it should be led in frontal attacks upon the German trenches without any artillery preparation whatever. One's sense of despair becomes complete when we find the man who was endowed in these terrible days with the chief responsibility for our national destinies drawing foolish precedents for a war against the most

* "1914," Lord French, p. 350.

† "The First World War," Colonel Repington, p. 35.

WAR OFFICE APATHY

powerful military combination in the world from a punitive expedition against a horde of black savages in the heart of Africa.

The War Office letter of January 19th gave an estimate of the supplies of ammunition to be expected down to the end of May. This estimate, though it was far short of the Army's requirements, was itself not realized in the deliveries of May by more than fifty per cent. Lord French complains that conditions of this sort made it quite impossible to forecast the ammunition supply at any given date, and almost impossible to make any definite arrangements in advance for co-operating with the French.

During the winter of 1914-15 no reserves of ammunition could be accumulated, the supplies falling to an incredibly low figure. Early in March, the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, which was going very well for us, and might have achieved very important results, had to be broken off after three days' fighting, owing to the ammunition giving out. Again Lord French addressed a strong representation to the War Office, urging that no success in driving back the enemy from French and Belgian territory could be secured until there was enough ammunition for sustained operations. The official reply to this was that the utmost economy must be practised, but a private letter, dated March 16th and said to have been dictated by Lord Kitchener himself, was addressed by Sir James Wolfe Murray to Lord French's Chief of Staff (Sir William Robertson) in which it was strongly hinted that our Army was wasting ammunition!

Our shortage was not simply in shells. We were greatly in need of heavy guns, and had been at a disadvantage with the Germans in this regard from the beginning of the war. The Germans themselves and the French had early become conscious of their deficiency in heavier ordnance and had set themselves to repair it, but our own

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War Office was much slower in realizing and making good our own need. In machine-guns, too, we were seriously outclassed, only two being allotted to each British battalion as against sixteen to each German. The Allied disability in this respect was severely felt in the early part of the war.

But even this was not all. The new conditions of warfare had introduced new and revived old weapons. Modern arms of precision compelled armies to go to earth, and the trenches of the opposing forces could be brought within ranges which recalled the days of Waterloo and the Peninsula. This in turn revived the use of those hand-grenades which gave the Grenadiers their name. Trench guns and mortars also became familiar features of modern battles. It seems almost incredible that our War Office should have lightly disregarded the reports they received about the use of these new and revived engines of war, and made little effort to meet the needs of our Army. Lord French was compelled to improvise experiments and actual manufacturing plants in the rear of our own armies, in order to produce a supply of these trench weapons.

The expenditure of ammunition at Neuve Chapelle in March, inadequate as it was to produce the desired and possible results, compelled the army to stand on the defensive for a time. The British public was unaware, and is still unaware, what a waste of opportunity and still more precious life resulted from this continued penury of ammunition. For once we cannot blame the politicians. They did all that was possible in the light they had. In October, 1914, a Munitions Committee of the Cabinet was appointed, of which Mr. Lloyd George was a member. It seems to have been thought that a development of the ordinary sources of production would suffice to give us all that was required. But the armament firms and the non-munition firms with which they sub-contracted

EFFORTS TO INCREASE OUTPUT

were badly disabled by the indiscriminate system of recruiting which had encouraged the essential skilled workman to give up his job and shoulder the arms he ought to have been helping to manufacture.

We may be sure, from what subsequently happened, that if the situation had been fairly presented to Mr. Lloyd George he would have quickly reacted to the distressing situation in France. He was conscious that things were not as they should be. Speaking one Sunday afternoon (February 28th, 1915) at Bangor, on various aspects of the war, he diverged into a significant passage on the subject of munitions. "Much as I should like," he said, "to talk about the need for more men, that is not the point of my special appeal to-day. We stand more in need of equipment than we do of men. This is an engineers' war, and it will be won or lost according to the efforts or shortcomings of engineers. Unless we are able to equip our armies, our predominance in men will avail us nothing. We need men, but we need arms more than men, and delay in producing them is full of peril for this country."

Evidence of continued official solicitude is found in the passage of the Defence of the Realm regulation based on the original Defence of the Realm Act of November 27th, 1914, and empowering the War Office and Admiralty to take possession of any factory, or of its plant, and use it as they deemed necessary. They might order such work to be done as they thought fit in such factories, and the work was to be carried out under conditions prescribed by government. The belief in committees was pathetic. In April a committee of the Treasury was set up with Mr. Lloyd George as chairman. There was an Armaments Output Committee in May, and a Committee on Production. But conditions at the front remained the same. There was little appreciation in ministerial circles, still less among the people at large, of the magnitude of the problem.

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Before any adequate reform was possible, there had to be a sensational public exposure, and the downfall of a government on this specific question. The Army in France knew only too well the state of affairs, and Lord Kitchener and the military authorities under him were kept fully instructed. But the information which would have resulted in adequate action was blocked on its way to the Cabinet and War Council. Here again the terrible responsibility must fall on Lord Kitchener. "The trouble was," writes Colonel Repington, "that Lord Kitchener did not comprehend the importance of artillery in the war, took no effective measures to increase our supplies of it, and concealed the truth of the situation from his colleagues in the Cabinet."

This obscurantism was confirmed by the embargo on regular war correspondents at the front. These devotees of Mars and Minerva may sometimes be embarrassing to commanders in the field, but the circumstances now being related show that they have their purpose and that they provide an essential link between a British Army abroad and the British public which provides and pays for it at home. In the end the war correspondent had to be called in in order to break the spell of ignorance and apathy which was threatening to ruin our cause.

A great obligation is owing to Lord French for the action he took in the end. If he had not thrown convention to the winds and been willing to stake his high position in France on the welfare and salvation of our armies, the war might have had a different ending.

The Commander-in-Chief had missed no opportunity of informing prominent Members of Parliament of the actual state of affairs with regard to the ammunition and gun supply. And he had not neglected the Press. In one interview he gave on March 22nd, he said: "It is a rough war, but the problem it sets is a comparatively

MR. ASQUITH'S SPEECH AT NEWCASTLE

simple one—munitions, more munitions, always more munitions; this is the essential question, the governing condition of all progress, of every leap forward." This found its way into most English papers. Again on March 27th, he gave an interview to the *Times* in which he remarked: "The protraction of the war depends entirely upon the supply of men and munitions. Should these be unsatisfactory, the war will be accordingly prolonged. I dwell emphatically on the need for munitions."

The resentment of the British army and its high command was increased by the spectacle of trainloads of sorely needed ammunition passing along our rear on the way to Marseilles and the Dardanelles. On April 22nd the Germans made their first attack with poison gas in the second battle of Ypres, when the British forces were as hard pressed as in the first battle of that name.

Just about that moment the last straw was added to the burden of British patience and endurance at the front by Mr. Asquith's famous Newcastle speech in which the Prime Minister denied all the reports about a shortage of ammunition. "When I read this speech, after all my public and private appeals," writes the Commander-in-Chief, "I lost any hope that I had entertained of receiving help from the government as then constituted." To-day with our knowledge of the true state of our armies' equipment at that time it is impossible to read that utterance without astonishment. Mr. Asquith, as reported in the *Times* (April 21st, 1915), said:

"Let one thing be clearly understood. I am not here either to acknowledge or to impute remissness. I do not believe that any Army or Navy has ever entered upon a campaign with better or more adequate equipment. I saw a statement the other day that the operations not only of our Army, but of our Allies, were being crippled, or at any rate

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hampered, by our failure to provide the necessary ammunition. I say there is not a word of truth in that statement, because, if it were believed, it is calculated to dishearten our troops, to discourage our Allies, and to stimulate the hopes and the activities of our enemies. Nor is there any more truth in the suggestion that the government, of which I am the head, have only recently become alive to the importance and the urgency of these matters. On the contrary, in the earliest days of the war, when some of our would-be instructors were thinking of quite other things, they were already receiving our anxious attention, and as far back, I think, as the month of September, I appointed a Committee of the Cabinet, presided over by Lord Kitchener, to survey the situation from this point of view—a Committee whose labours and inquiries resulted in a very substantial enlargement both on the field and of machinery of supply.”

Such a speech at such a moment requires some explanation. But Mr. Asquith was not alone in administering this Godfrey’s Cordial to a nation become rather suspicious and alarmed. Mr. Lloyd George himself on the next day was giving even more explicit assurances and crying “All’s well” from the look-out. Speaking on a motion by Mr. Hewins on the subject of unified control of munitions production, Mr. Lloyd George proceeded to give figures which sent the House home in a warm glow of satisfaction and corroborated the effects of Mr. Asquith’s speech throughout the country. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said :

“ I will show the House how up to the present the output has proceeded. I will not give the first month of our output for reasons which will be per-

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fectly obvious. The figures which I use will be figures purely of ratio, and not the actual output. I will not give the month of August. They are very sharp people across the water, and they might be able to get from that what we are turning out. Therefore I begin with September. Take the figure 20 as representing our output in September. By October it went up to 90; in November it was 90 again, because the new machinery which was laid down did not come into operation until a month later. By December it went up to 156; in January it was 186; in February it was 256, and in March it was 388. (An Hon. Member: That is for artillery?) That is purely artillery. That is the problem, and therefore I am directing myself to it. That means that, even taking the increased output of September, by the month of March that output had been multiplied nineteen-fold, and I have no hesitation in saying that in the month of April the increase will correspond to the increase which has taken place in the preceding month. I am perfectly certain that this will gratify the House, because I so cordially agree with the hon. gentleman when he says that success in this war is a question of ammunition. And, still more important, the saving of lives is a question of ammunition, because that is the great lesson of the last great battle—that the more you are able to pour shot and shell into a given area which you are going to attack the more lives you save, and success is not as costly, if you have plenty of ammunition. That is what we are applying ourselves to.”

If the nameless interpolator in this speech had asked “Is that high explosive?” he would have brought the whole statistical fabric to the ground like a castle of cards. Mr. Lloyd George’s figures referred almost

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wholly to 18-pounder shrapnel and were quite irrelevant to the main question at issue.

We must now return to Lord French's narrative in order to appreciate by contrast the other side of the picture. On May 9th the Battle of Festubert was begun by the British for the purpose of relieving the almost intolerable pressure at Ypres. The Commander-in-Chief tells us he entered that fight with feelings of keen anxiety. After all his efforts and entreaties less than 8 instead of 50 per cent. of our shells were high explosive, and the ammunition available would serve for only 40 minutes of artillery preparation.

No words here can improve on the effect of Lord French's soldierly account of the battle. "On the tower of a ruined church," he writes, "I spent several hours in close observation of the operations. Nothing since the Battle of the Aisne had ever impressed me so deeply with the terrible shortage of artillery and ammunition as did the events of that day. As I watched the Aubers Ridge, I clearly saw the great inequality of the artillery duels, and, as attack after attack failed, I could see that the absence of sufficient artillery support was doubling and trebling our losses in men."

It is difficult to read this description without a feeling of rage and of regret that the responsibility was not fairly brought home to the proper quarter. But the truth, long fettered and suppressed, was soon to be free and afoot, and marching towards its own vindication and revenge. The determination formed by Lord French on the little church tower amid that loud and bloody scene shook a government to its fall and saved the British armies and the British cause. "I determined," writes this great and chivalrous soldier, "on taking the most drastic measures to destroy the apathy of a government which had brought the Empire to the brink of disaster. A friend was standing by my side on the tower, and to him I poured out my

LORD FRENCH TAKES ACTION

doubts and fears and announced my determination. He warned me that the politicians would never forgive the action I proposed, and that it meant my certain recall from the command in France. But my decision was made and I immediately started for my Headquarters, fully determined on my future course of action."

At Headquarters he found a reed cut and notched to his purpose in Colonel Repington, military correspondent of the *Times*. As if to clinch his resolution, he also found a telegram from Lord Kitchener, directing that 20 per cent. of their scanty supply of ammunition should be shipped off to that scene of deplorable waste and failure, the Dardanelles. Lord French at once directed that all necessary material should be furnished to Colonel Repington in evidence that the vital need of high explosive shells had been the fatal bar to the success of our Army on that day. He also ordered that copies of all the correspondence which had passed between himself and the Government with regard to the shortage of ammunition should be made and handed to his military secretary and Captain Frederick Guest, one of his A.D.C.'s, and that these officers should proceed at once to England and lay this evidence before Mr. Lloyd George, "who had already shown me," writes Lord French, "by his special interest in this subject that he grasped the deadly nature of our necessities." It was also to be submitted to Mr. Balfour and Mr. Bonar Law, who had also shown themselves to be sympathetic. He accompanied these documents with another memorandum carefully setting forth the requirements of the Army in ammunition.

The fateful telegram was subjected to severe censorship in France, but apparently managed to escape further mutilation in England.* By a providential mercy the explosive element in it survived and found its way intact

* See on this subject "The First World War," Colonel Repington, p. 39-40.

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into the columns of the *Times*, much to the disgust, openly expressed, of official persons. "The open official chagrin at its emergence into print," writes Mr. Harold Spender, "is one of the most significant features of the whole episode." It was on the morning of May 14th that readers of the *Times* read the damning news which was soon to re-echo through the whole land.

The *Times* played up spiritedly to its correspondent. Captions and big print were used with effect. The meaning of the message was well enforced in a leading article, and on the 15th its substance was repeated. The really operative sentence, sufficient to dislodge the strongest government that ever existed, was lifted into textual relief: "The want of an unlimited supply of high explosive was a fatal bar to success." These simple words, if the similitude be changed, were like a clear west wind sweeping away all the fog of evasion and falsehood and obscurantism in which the subject had become involved. But it may be interesting to read the longer passage in which this deadly script occurred:

"The result of our attacks on Sunday last in the districts of Fromelles and Richebourg were disappointing. We found the enemy much more strongly posted than we expected. We had not sufficient high explosive to level his parapets to the ground after the French practice, and when our infantry gallantly stormed the trenches, as they did in both attacks, they found a garrison undismayed, many entanglements still intact, and maxims on all sides ready to pour in streams of bullets. We could not maintain ourselves in the trenches won, and our reserves were not thrown in because the conditions for success in assault were not present. The attacks were well planned and valiantly conducted. The infantry did splendidly, but the conditions were too hard. The

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want of an unlimited supply of high explosive was a fatal bar to our success."

By way of contrast Colonel Repington recorded the fact that the French, in co-operation with whom we made our movement upon the German lines, fired 276 rounds of high explosive per gun in one day, and levelled the enemy's defences with the ground.

The correspondent proceeded :

" If we can break through the hard outer crust of the German defences, we believe that we can scatter the German armies, whose offensive causes us no concern at all. But to break this hard crust we need more high explosive, more heavy howitzers and more men."

The *Times* rightly remarked that " these grave words had made a deep impression throughout the country."

Magna est veritas. It brought events along with surprising promptitude. Mr. Lloyd George perceived, like the character in the comedy, that he had been made a fool of, that as chairman of the Munitions Committee of the Treasury, which had been set up on April 13th, he had received a good deal less information than he had had a right to expect. He therefore resigned on May 19th, but on the same date the entire Ministry was requested to do likewise. The Liberal Government had come into power in 1910. On this day Mr. Asquith announced that it no longer existed, and that a new government on a broader basis was to take its place.

It is curious to look back and note that only a week previously Mr. Asquith, asked in the House of Commons whether he had considered the desirability of " admitting into the ranks of Ministers leading members of the various political parties," had replied that no such step was in contemplation, and five days later another Liberal member made a similar suggestion. Both these members were

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close friends of Mr. Lloyd George. It is certain that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had already envisaged this method of escaping the Kitchener obsession, and of giving a less precarious tenure to ministerial appointments. It is a great pity a national government, as well as national service, were not instituted six months before as soon as the nation realized that the war was not going to be a quick procession to victory on the part of the Allies.

A word or two should be said on the conduct of the two Liberal leaders during these events. Mr. Asquith has been the victim of some injustice. It has been assumed that he was alone in soothing the nation into a sense of false security. As we have seen, Mr. Lloyd George was even more explicit in his assurances. On June 3rd, 1919, in a speech at the Connaught Rooms, Mr. Asquith returned to the famous Newcastle speech. He pointed out that there were important reasons of state why the pessimistic reports that had appeared in certain British papers should be corrected. At the same time it was necessary to stimulate the production of munitions of war. "So dissatisfied and apprehensive did I become," said Mr. Asquith, "at the relatively slow rate of progress, as compared with our expectations and hopes, that I resolved to make a direct personal appeal both to masters and to men. That was the object and the motive of my visit to Newcastle. But, observe, it was a very delicate business. I had to think, not only of our own people, but of our Allies, and still more of the enemy. Operations of great possible moment, as I knew, although I could not disclose it, were then impending, and it was of the utmost importance not to expose our own weaknesses or to give encouragement to the Germans to think that we could not hold our own or more than hold our own."

At that time also Italy was thinking of throwing in her lot with the Allies and it was desirable she should know that the ship on which she proposed to embark was

LORD KITCHENER'S LETTER

sound and seaworthy. Yet even this reason of state would not of itself have justified the favourable view presented by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Asquith in his speech at the Connaught Rooms revealed that he had previously obtained from Lord Kitchener an assurance which seemed to justify the tone of the Newcastle pronouncement. This letter from the Secretary of State for War ran thus :

“ MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

“ I have had a talk with French. He told me I could let you know that, with the present supply of ammunition, he will have as much as his troops will be able to use in the next forward movement.”

The recital of this letter in the Connaught Rooms produced “loud cheers.” Yet it is quite certain that Lord French said nothing resembling this to Lord Kitchener. The Commander-in-Chief had at that time reached breaking-point in his patience with War Office delays and refusals. The evidence is wholly against the credibility of this letter. Yet we can scarcely complain of Mr. Asquith and his chief colleague for assuming it to be true. Mr. Asquith was, indeed, always inclined to a far too passive reliance on Lord Kitchener's opinion. The Secretary of State for War ought to have been the eye and mind of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet on military subjects. Mr. Asquith was not a military man. It may be questioned whether he even understood “the principles which attach to the discharge of a military rifle.” Mr. Lloyd George was much more of an expert at this time in political and electoral than in lethal powder and shot. These great responsible Ministers ought to have been able to rely on the War Secretary as the channel of communication between the High Command in the field and the Government at home.

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A curious thing is that when Lord Kitchener rose in the House of Lords on May 18th to throw light on these dark events, instead of justifying Mr. Asquith he quietly threw up his brief and admitted that the supply of ammunition had been unsatisfactory. Lord Kitchener seems throughout to have been bewildered by the position in which popular idolatry and the exigencies of war had placed him. But though the War Secretary thus admitted the case against himself, that did not prevent him from being extremely angry with the man who had done so much to save the army and the country. "Lord K.," writes Colonel Repington, "was so furious with me about it that he ordered Sir John French, in a private letter which the Field-Marshal showed me, not to allow me to visit his Headquarters any more, and it was not until the Battle of the Somme that I was able to see with my own eyes the complete transformation in the relative strength of the two artilleries, effected by a year of Lloyd George's administration of his new office." Such are the *petitesses* of great men on which philosophers and biographers have so often commented.

No one ever suspected Mr. Asquith of deliberately deceiving the nation on a vital question for reasons of state or any other reasons. It is a pity he delivered the speech in June, 1919, to which reference has been made. No criticism has ever shaken the credibility of a single word in Lord French's narrative. It is especially a pity that the great Liberal statesman employed as an argument against the Commander-in-Chief that no trace could be found in the official records of the War Office of Lord French's demands for high explosives. Nobody, as the *Times* remarked in its leading article,* would feel any surprise at that.

The simple truth is that the Treasury Committee on Munitions, including the Prime Minister and the Chancellor

* June 4, 1919.

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of the Exchequer, were not kept informed as they should have been of the state of affairs at the front. When the sage was asked by a lady how he came to make a certain statement, he replied courageously, "It was ignorance, ma'am, pure ignorance." That was also the explanation of those two Ministerial speeches which were so promptly discredited. Colonel Repington's narrative happens to confirm this opinion. He tells us it was Mr. Lloyd George who applied the match to his train of government, laid in the famous telegram. "I saw him (Mr. Lloyd George) on my return and he told me that immediately he had read my telegram in the *Times* of May 14th he had gone to the Prime Minister and had informed him that he would be unable to go on. I was astonished at his ignorance of the facts. He had been on the Cabinet Munitions Committee appointed in October, 1914, and on another Special Committee assembled in April, 1915, to deal with war material.* Yet he seemed to know nothing of what was happening. I gave to Lloyd George a hastily drafted paper exposing all our deficiencies in munitions and guns of all types, and giving the history of the shortage."

Mr. Lloyd George's indignation at having thus been "let down" was severe and righteous, and he made ample amends in the sequel for the negligence to which he had been an unintentional party.

The first Coalition Government was quickly formed, but even before it was complete a beneficent breach had been made in that concentration of function and responsibility with which Lord Kitchener had invested his own office. The War Office was relieved of the duty of equipping, and confined mainly to that of raising and recruiting the new armies. A new Department speedily took form—the Ministry of Munitions—to the headship of which Mr. Lloyd George was nominated by a unanimous public

* Mr. Lloyd George was chairman of this "Treasury Committee."

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opinion. He had held the high office of Chancellor of the Exchequer for seven years, and his transference to a brand-new department of state was a step downwards in the official hierarchy as well as something in the nature of a speculative adventure. But the task was his, and he set himself to it with a fiery and indefatigable energy.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIERY CROSS

NOBODY will dispute that when the political leaders had repented of their involuntary ignorance and shortcoming on the gun and shell question, they proceeded with great promptitude and energy to bring forth works meet for repentance. One looks back on those days with amazement. It was ten months since this nation had entered into a struggle with the strongest military combination in the world, in which not only its liberty and glorious tradition, but its very existence, was at stake. Yet only now was it setting itself seriously to the equipment of its armies for their colossal task. Looking back over those months and considering the great disadvantages under which our soldiers were fighting, one's conception of their heroism and devotion can only be greatly heightened. Yet with full allowance for these noble attributes of our armies, we must still say, in old Puritanic parlance, that unless it had pleased the Lord extraordinarily to show mercy, we should have been overwhelmed and defeated during these perilous months.

One or two examples of our position and procedure will suffice. On December 20, 1915, in the House of Commons, Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that in May of that year, at a time when the Germans were turning out 250,000 shells, mostly high explosive, our own output was 2,500 a day in high explosive and 13,000 in shrapnel. No wonder honourable members sat aghast at such a revelation of peril providentially escaped.

Again, speaking in Parliament earlier in the year (July 28, 1915), Mr. Lloyd George recalled that after we had

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been fighting for nearly a year on the Western front, and at a distressing disadvantage in guns and shells and every species of auxiliary weapon required under the new conditions of warfare, scarcely any night-shifts were being worked even in the professional armament works. It would be a mistake to attribute this simply to "idleness and mess." It was due far more to the lack of skilled men owing to the indiscriminate recruiting for the fighting forces. One of the first duties of the new Ministry of Munitions was to transfer thousands of workers in ordinary peace industries to the munition factories. But it is remarkable that in those awful days four-fifths of our munition-making machinery were running for only one shift in each twenty-four hours—nine or ten hours' work, followed by a rest for the next fourteen hours!* It was time we sent the fiery cross through the land if we were to escape the "damnation" which, as we can now see, was rapidly overtaking us.

The new Government lost no time. Lord French and Colonel Repington had made their great and effectual stroke in the middle of May. The Act setting up the new Ministry of Munitions was passed on June 9th, and the Munitions of War Act, extending the powers of the State over our industrial system, followed on July 2nd. But even before the Ministry was formally in being, Mr. Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions designate, had started, on June 3rd, on a crusade throughout the North and West of England with all the apostolic fervour of a Peter the Hermit.

Such an oratorical campaign was an essential preliminary to the mighty task of munition-making on which the nation had now to enter. The people had to be awakened in the first place to a sense of the national danger and the tremendous issues at stake and to the need for throwing their entire energy into the business of equipping

*See "The Great Munition Feat." G. A. B. Dewar, p. 48.

SIR PERCY GIROUARD

the armies which were standing between them and woes unimaginable. The appeal had to be made with something of the fervour and emotion of a religious revival, and Mr. Lloyd George had just the gift that was required. No man was so able as he to preach the duty of sacrifice at a great national crisis, of subordinating every selfish and particular interest to the one transcendent object of winning through to victory. He knew as no other man in the country how to touch the deepest and most responsive chords in the national temperament, and one cannot read the reports of the speeches grouped under the title of the "Appeal to the Workshop"* without a sense of the passionate conviction which beats through every phrase and period.

Mr. Lloyd George set the first beacon blazing in Manchester on June 3rd, 1915. He was accompanied there by Sir Frederick Donaldson, the head of Woolwich Arsenal, and by Sir Percy Girouard, the railway expert who built Lord Kitchener's desert line which made possible the final victory of Omdurman. The writer vividly recalls Sir Percy Girouard as a man whose every feature and movement betokened strength of character. A single eyeglass gripped tightly in one eye and a big cigar held as tightly in the corner of his mouth were among his invariable attributes. He had strong convictions which he expressed as strongly, and the furniture within his reach was apt to suffer from his emphasis. It may be questioned whether two persons ever took with them upon a war-path a bigger joint stock of human energy than this Welshman and this French Canadian! Manchester has added to its cotton staple a great engineering industry, and the Minister addressed a meeting of Manchester engineers. It was a rousing and heartening speech. Mr. Lloyd George had learnt his lesson, and he was determined the whole country

* "Through Terror to Triumph": speeches of The Right Hon. David Lloyd George, M.P., arranged by F. N. Stevenson, B.A.

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should learn it also. The new spirit will be judged from such a passage as this :

“ It is a war of munitions. We are fighting against the best organized community in the world, the best organized whether for war or peace, and we have been employing too much the haphazard, leisurely, go-as-you-please methods which, believe me, would not have enabled us to maintain our place as a nation even in peace very much longer. The nation now needs all the machinery that is capable of being used for turning out munitions or equipment, all the skill that is available for that purpose, all the industry, all the labour, and all the strength, power and resource of everyone to the utmost. Everything that would help us to overcome our difficulty and supply our shortages we want to mobilize in such a way as to produce, in the shortest space of time, the greatest quantity of the best and most efficient war material. That means victory.”

Mr. Lloyd George trampled under foot the silly phrase with which we had essayed to start the war : “ Business first.” The war was to be first and business—that is, civil business—last. “ Government work,” he said, “ must not be sacrificed to any civil work, however important it is. The work of the country must come first because, unless it does, there will be no country left worth working for. Don’t let the flag be shot down for any man’s profit.” Labour was to be at the command of the State and ready to move wherever it could be applied to the greatest effect. Under prevailing conditions the British workman at home could no more be allowed to say where he should work than the British soldier in the trenches could choose where he should fight. He urged Lancashire to organize itself into committees for the great task in hand.

THE DAWN OF CONSCRIPTION

This Manchester speech is interesting because it contains what seems to be the earliest expression of Mr. Lloyd George's growing belief in the necessity for conscription. He was by this time almost convinced that Kitchener recruitings, Derby Schemes, and other efforts, much as they had done, were not capable of calling out the full man-power of the nation, and less than that would not serve in the struggle on which we were embarked. He had been impressed with the spectacle of the Russian steam-roller being forced backward out of Galicia by the sheer weight of the Germanic legions. It looked as though numbers would be the decisive factor in the game, and conscription seemed to be forced upon us. Such a conclusion meant the sacrifice of distinctive Liberal principle, and Mr. Lloyd George had a good deal to suffer from people who preferred their shibboleths to their country.

It may be asked whether, despite all the eloquence of statesmen and the tuition of experience, the nation ever did attain to a universal sense of the issues involved in the great war. Working folks who thought that "ca' canny" could be continued into war times, politicians who would not believe that even Armageddon could affect the validity of their long-cherished ideas—people and opinions of this sort persisted throughout the whole contest. Mr. Lloyd George, whose temperament was quite free from such stiff and stubborn fanaticism, fought these moods from every tribune. "Prolonged public discussion on the platform," he said, in this speech at Manchester, "discussion in the Press, discussion in the workshops—these methods are totally inapplicable to a period of war." "Party politics," he said, "are gradually vanishing." We shall see how long a battle had to be fought with labour folk who deemed that war ought to respect their trade union regulations.

So on the subject of conscription. This Liberal, who in days not long ago had led the movement for peace and disarmament, had now the open mind and the imagination

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which enabled him to put aside all these inveterate prepossessions when higher interests demanded the sacrifice. One of Mr. Lloyd George's attributes which these speeches bring into clear view is his freedom from mental coagulations of every sort. Some of his Liberal hearers were perhaps a little scandalized when the Minister diverged into a passage such as this :

“Conscription means raising by compulsory methods armies to fight Britain's battles abroad. Even that is a question, not of principle, but of necessity. If the necessity arose, I am certain no man of any party would protest. But, pray, don't talk about it as if it were anti-democratic. We won and saved our liberties in this land on more than one occasion by compulsory service. The great Republic of the West won its independence, saved its national existence, by compulsory service; and two of the greatest democratic countries of Europe to-day—France and Italy—are defending their national existence and liberties by means of compulsory service. It has been the greatest weapon in the hands of the democracy many a time for the winning and preservation of freedom.”

Such words, coming from a man of Mr. Lloyd George's tradition, made a greater impression than if a Tory or professed Imperialist had counselled compulsion.

As the dark year, 1915, grew older, Mr. Lloyd George's belief in the necessity for conscription grew stronger. It finds expression in the autumn in the fervid preface he contributed to a collection of his war speeches. He wrote :

“There has been a great awakening in all the Allied countries, and prodigious efforts are being put forth to equip the armies in the field. I know what

THE PRICE OF NATIONAL EXISTENCE

we are doing : our exertions are undoubtedly immense. But can we do more either in men or in material ? Nothing but our best and utmost can pull us through. Are we now straining every nerve to make up for lost time ? Are we getting all the men we shall want to put into the fighting line next year to enable us even to hold our own ? Does every man who can help, whether by fighting or by providing material, understand clearly that ruin awaits remissness ? How many people in this country fully apprehend the significance of the Russian retreat ? ”

Then again in the impressive close :

“ If the nation hesitates, when the need is clear, to take the necessary steps to call forth its manhood to defend honour and existence : if vital decisions are postponed until too late : if we neglect to make ready for all eventualities : if, in fact, we give ground for the accusation that we are slouching into disaster as if we were walking along the ordinary paths of peace without an enemy in sight, then I can see no hope ; but if we sacrifice all we own and all we like for our native land : if our preparations are characterized by grip, resolution and a prompt readiness in every sphere, then victory is assured.”

In the end, as the world knows, the Cabinet came bodily round to Mr. Lloyd George's view, and a policy of compulsory service was adopted which with much advantage might have been applied at the outset of the war.

From Manchester the Minister of Munitions carried his message to Liverpool. Here again he spoke frankly on the subject of trade union regulations as affecting the output of guns and shells. He did not question that these rigid rules which forbade unskilled men to work by the side of the skilled or to do work somewhat arbitrarily termed “ skilled,” which prohibited a man from attending

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to more than one machine and limited the amount of a man's output to an average scale—he did not question that all this might have a necessary protective effect in time of peace. But with the enemy at our doors it was inappropriate and might prove fatal. The Minister pointed out how the women of France were doing good work in the shell factories, and the women of England might be allowed to serve in the same way.

Mr. Lloyd George is never too solemn and serious for a stroke of humour. The writer remembers how once in the Palazzo di San Giorgio at Genoa, when the proceedings had become very ponderous and arid, the British Prime Minister tossed a little note to a friend across the table asking if there was never to be a little humorous relief. He had his little interlude of fun on the subject of trade regulations in this Liverpool speech. "I happen," he said, "to belong to about the strictest, the most jealous trade union in the world. If any unskilled man—and by an unskilled man we mean a man who has not paid our fees—if any man of that sort, however intelligent he was, tried to come in and interfere with our business, we would soon settle him. But if during the period of the war there were any particular use for lawyers, if you found that upon lawyers depended the success of the war—I know it requires a good deal of imagination—even my Celtic imagination will hardly attain to that exalted height—but if that were possible for a moment, do you suppose that the Incorporated Law Society, the greatest and narrowest of all trade unions, could stand in the way of bringing in outside help in order to enable us to get through our work?" Truly if any man could woo the trade unions from these cherished regulations it was Mr. Lloyd George.

At Cardiff, where the Minister arrived on June 11th, he was among his own people. Here he indicated three methods of organization for the output of munitions. They might set up two or three national factories in their

CONSCRIPTING THE WORKSHOPS

district which should do nothing but turn out shot and shell for the army. In that case machinery would have to be requisitioned from the neighbouring shops. There was no time for new lathes and other machines to be ordered and manufactured. This plan of campaign had been adopted by Leeds and other centres in Yorkshire.

The second method was that each workshop should apply what tools it had for turning out shell. Some of the existing machinery would serve well enough, but it might be necessary to purchase more, and above all a supply of gauges, the most vital of all appliances for shell-making, would have to be obtained. This was the method preferred in Lancashire and applied with great success in France.

The third was a combination of the two former. Two or three works in South Wales might be converted into national arsenals. Equipped with machinery, these shops might be able to finish work which came from outside and to turn out the completed shell. At the same time the other workshops would be doing such work as they were capable of, the two systems operating side by side. For example, some workshop might be able to carry the manufacture of a shell to a certain stage. The finishing of the shell might be left to the national arsenal. The Minister's appeal was mingled with touches of pathos. "Many a valley in South Wales," he said, "has become a valley of the shadows." It was the same message in differing phrase. "I am here," said the Minister, "to ask you to plant the flag on your workshops. Every lathe you possess, recruit it, enlist it." Yet, despite this appeal, so strongly did the trade union susceptibility persist that South Wales was in a few weeks the scene of one of the worst trade disputes in the war.

From Cardiff the Munitioneer-in-Chief passed to Bristol, where he again appealed for a temporary suspension of trade union rules, especially with regard to the introduction

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of women and unskilled workers into the "skilled" occupations. How hard these trade customs died even in the atmosphere of war! Yet they gradually disappeared, and long before the struggle was over women and unskilled labourers were everywhere transgressing those written and unwritten laws which the unions had come to regard as their indispensable guarantees. The Bristol speech blossomed now and then into poetry. "We are fighting an enemy," said the Minister, "that has been taught in its schools to subordinate everything to the Fatherland. Are Britons less patriots? Is Britain not a country you can love as much as any German can love his Fatherland? I know how a Welshman loves his native hills! You are in the most beautiful country in the world. I have never met a foreigner yet who, when he first sets his eye on this gem in the ocean, is not impressed with its beauty. A land of poets beyond compare, a land of heroes who have dazzled the world, a land of the men who in thought and action have led humanity along the ascending paths of liberty. Is Britain not worth fighting for? I ask every man, be his function what it may, to use his strength to fight for this beautiful land in the days to come."

We have dealt with some particularity on this campaign in the North and West of England because it represents a characteristic service which Mr. Lloyd George rendered to his country at this time and which, it is certain, no other man could have performed with the same effect. This whirlwind campaign, writes Mr. George A. B. Dewar, was "the *tour de force* which the army and the whole nation needed." "It shocked the country to attention." It was necessary, before the positive work of organization and output could be set going, that the people should grasp the nature of the newly revealed crisis and the obligation laid upon every man to place his entire energy, without stint or reserve, at his country's disposal. We are sometimes apt to disparage the spoken word, but here was a

THE MUNITIONS OF WAR ACT

case when the word was scarcely distinguishable from an act, when nothing but the influence of a dynamic personality, conveyed by direct and eloquent speech, could effect what was required. Mr. Lloyd George did not create the guns and shells which began to flow out in ever-broadening spate from the middle of 1915, but he did much to produce the psychological conditions which made that tremendous effort possible.

Meantime our whole industrial system was being re-organized with a view to the most massive output of engines of slaughter and destruction. I have already remarked on the strange irony of events by which the man who a year or more ago had fought, heel in ground, against even a five-pound addition to our military estimates was now to lavish public money up to astronomical figures on munitions of war. Such an earthquake as the great European War begets strange paradoxes. Sir Edward Cook, the greatest stickler for the freedom and independence of the Press, was fated as Press Censor to impose more shackles on it than it had ever known in the past. So the apostle of peace and disarmament became Munitioner-in-Chief, and a Liberal and democratic statesman invested the State in the Munitions of War Act with powers over the life and work of the people that a year previously would have seemed an incredible tyranny and oppression.

Mr. Lloyd George introduced the Munitions of War Bill into the House of Commons on June 23rd, 1915, with a speech which gave some account up to date of the new munitioning effort. The Bill passed through Parliament on July 2nd, which shows that under the new sense of responsibility no time was being lost. It confirmed and extended the powers of the State over employers and employees which had been assumed under the Defence of the Realm Act. It provided alternative tribunals for the settlement of disputes, the Board of Trade being appointed

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referee in all unsettled ones. A very drastic but wholly justified provision was the making of strikes and lock-outs a penal offence, five pounds per day per man being the price fixed for the pleasures of locking out or "downing tools." We shall have something to say about this provision in a few moments.

A very important clause dealt with the limitation of profits in controlled establishments. As Mr. Lloyd George pointed out in his introductory speech, the trade unions had made this an essential condition of agreement. Workmen, they said, were quite willing to work for the State, to exert their whole strength and suspend their precious regulations, so long as they knew the work was of advantage to the country. But the objection in their minds always was that they were suspending regulations important to them in order to increase the profits of individual employers. This was a reasonable position, and the Act provided that the owners of these controlled factories were not to take more than 20 per cent. over "the average of the amount of the net profits for the two financial years of their establishment completed next before the outbreak of the war, or a proportionate part thereof." Profits in excess of this were to be paid into the Treasury, and all changes in the scale of wages or other remuneration had to be submitted to the Ministry of Munitions. The State thus assumed the control of profits in these establishments, and the principle was secured that wherever suspension of regulations took place it should be entirely for the benefit of the State and not of the individual employer.

As regards the much-debated trade union rules, the Act provided that the Board of Trade should decide whether any particular rule operated in restraint of production. It was also expressly stipulated in a schedule to the Act that the suspension should be for war time only, and should not be in prejudice of the unions and their members when peace returned.

THE COAL STRIKE IN SOUTH WALES

There is no doubt that the Act meant a drastic inroad into the "liberty of the subject." The "leaving certificate," which aroused a good deal of resentment, was a creation of the Act. Its object was to prevent one firm from enticing workpeople from another by the offer of higher wages or other inducements. Under this provision no employer might give work to a man who, within the previous six weeks, had been employed elsewhere on munition work, unless the workman had received a certificate showing that he left his work with his first employer's consent.

We can well imagine that for the smooth working of these orders, many of which were novel and irritating, a steady supply of goodwill on the part of workers and employers was necessary. Even so, the friction was never lubricated away down to the end of the war. Strikes, disputes, risings of shop stewards, continued to embarrass the authorities.

Scarcely, indeed, was the Munitions Act on the statute-book when it was subjected to a test which nearly reduced it to a dead letter. The coal miners of South Wales, in flagrant disregard of the second clause of the Act, risked the five pounds per day penalty and came out on strike. The law-breakers in this case numbered about a quarter of a million, and the Government naturally paused before the task of putting all these into the dock and exacting the penalty provided by the Act. Yet no Government can see the law and its sanctions openly defied and quietly submit to this proceeding without the loss of all its credit and authority.

This coal strike was an instance of what Mr. Lloyd George noted in one of his speeches, that numbers of people in this country never to the end realized the full meaning of our war with Germany. When the messenger in Shakespeare's play* brings news to Hotspur, on the eve of the

* First Part of *Henry IV* : Act IV, Sc. 1.

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decisive fight at Shrewsbury, that his father had fallen grievously sick, the young rebel exclaims :

“ Zounds ! how has he the leisure to be sick
In such a justling time ? ” . . .

and he continues :

“ Sick now ! droop now ! this sickness doth infect
The very life-blood of our enterprise :
'Tis catching hither, even to our camp. ”

So we may wonder how the miners of South Wales had the time or the detachment of mind for a strike in the very heart of the nation's agony for dear life. Some Governments, unable to punish the whole body of the transgressors, would have taken extreme measures against the leaders “ in order to encourage the others. ” But this is, happily, not the British way, and it was not Mr. Lloyd George's way. He went down to the district affected to reason with his fellow-countrymen, and, as on other occasions, his personal influence prevailed. A speech the Minister made at Cardiff, on July 21st, 1915, at the conclusion of the strike, is a good example of his heart to heart talks. “ To me it was a grief, ” he said—“ I can say more to you : to me the mere thought was a horror—that I should have to take part in a struggle with my best friends and with men who have the same blood coursing through their hearts as I have. It is a source of joy to me, a joy beyond any words which I can give you, that I am going back, having shaken hands with my fellow workmen in the South Wales minefield. ”

Yet, despite this renewal of love, the Minister did not fail to point out what the strike had meant. The bulk of the French coalfields were in German hands. France depended on us for our Welsh coal, and five French ships had been waiting in vain to fill their bunkers at Cardiff. Without coal, French resistance to the enemy was impossible.

KING COAL

A week later (July 29th) Mr. Lloyd George addressed a conference of representatives of the miners of Great Britain in the London Opera House in a speech which is another good example of the Minister's skill in picturesque and popular exposition :

“ We are short of coal to run the country in a great crisis. We are suffering from the patriotism of the miner. A quarter of a million of them have gone into the fighting line. . . . In times of peace coal is the most important element in the industrial life of the country. The blood which courses through the veins of industry in this country is made of distilled coal. In peace and in war, King Coal is the paramount Lord of Industry. It enters into every article of consumption and of utility. It is our real international coinage. We buy goods abroad, food and raw material. We pay, not in gold, but in coal. In war it is life for us and death for our foes. It not merely fetches and carries for us ; it makes the material and the ministry which it transports. It bends, it moulds, it fills the weapons of war. Steam means coal. Rifles mean coal. Machine guns mean coal. Cannons mean coal. Shells are made with coal. Shells are filled with coal. The very explosive inside them is coal, and then coal carries them on right into the battlefield to help our men.”

In the meantime the task of reorganizing our industries on a war basis proceeded quickly. The Ministry of Munitions itself had found a temporary home, even before it was formally constituted by Parliament, at 6, Whitehall Gardens. This new Department, which was to import an entirely new spirit into the production of munitions and was to perform a task of which the War Office with its incorrigible formalism and its conventional methods was

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quite incapable, consisted, to begin with, of about half a dozen enthusiasts gathered round a Minister who had just left the stately and well-entrenched position of Chancellor of the Exchequer to venture his credit and fortune on a brand-new office. Before the end of the war the staff of the Ministry of Munitions numbered, I believe, some 20,000 persons.

From time to time Mr. Lloyd George gave in the House of Commons an account of his stewardship. A large volume would be required to describe adequately the ever-growing extent and ramification of the system over which the Ministry presided. The country was divided into twelve areas, eight for England and Wales and two each for Scotland and Ireland. There were forty local munition committees distributed over the chief engineering centres, each with a small board of management of business men. From the beginning Mr. Lloyd George enlisted the best business brains of the country for the various divisions of work and responsibility which the Ministry set up. Many of them were earning high salaries, which in many cases were continued to them by their directors, after they had transferred their services to the State. The Ministry, therefore, got a great deal of this help free of cost. Civil servants likewise took upon themselves much more onerous duties without any increase of pay.

In addition to the co-operative areas established in order that the whole of the suitable machinery therein should be available for munition work, the Minister quickly decided to set up sixteen national munition factories in different parts of the country, as near as possible to the supplies of coal and iron and labour. These were nationally managed and controlled, and provided with the requisite machinery, some of it obtained by direct order from machine-tool manufacturers and some requisitioned from existing firms. The Government took the bold step of placing all the great machine-tool makers under State

EXCEEDING THE OFFICIAL ESTIMATES

control. All these establishments were turned into Government factories without protest from their owners, though the process meant a limiting of profits and the submission to many restrictions.

In June, 1915, Mr. Lloyd George crossed to Boulogne to take part in one of those inter-Allied conferences in which he had always great faith. Artillery officers from the French Army and the British Expeditionary Force were present, and there was a full discussion on the situation and prospects with regard to material of war. As a result of this conference ten large national establishments, in addition to the sixteen, were set up. It should be mentioned here that the number of these national munition factories for land service before the war amounted to three. In August, 1916, their number had increased to 95.

A powerful stimulus was also given at this conference to the production of big guns in England. Mr. Lloyd George declined to receive the first estimate of the requirement in guns presented by General du Cane, the representative of the British Forces, on the ground of its inadequacy. A revised estimate was sent in. Lord Kitchener declared the programme would take three years. Armament firm magnates produced reports and other literature on the subject. Mr. Lloyd George swept all these dubitations away and ordered the thing to be done. In heavy guns Mr. Lloyd George delighted to order in advance of official estimates and in the teeth of official protests. Again and again he applied the blind eye to the telescope, and orders were issued before the authorities had finished arguing. On August 15th, 1916, Mr. Montagu, who had succeeded Mr. Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions, made an interesting statement about the work of the Munitions Department up to date. He referred to this subject of big guns. "It is no secret to say," he remarked, "that Mr. Lloyd George ordered far more heavy guns than was then thought by the War Office to be necessary. It

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is no secret to say that before he left the Ministry of Munitions he had the satisfaction of receiving new requirements from the War Office which showed that he had not ordered too many but too few, and yet, notwithstanding that, it is to his foresight that the surplus guns will be all ready in or about early spring of next year." Always, it would seem, the free lay mind of the Minister of Munitions, with its play of far-sighted imagination round every problem, had the better of the stiffer and more professional intelligence.

Mr. Lloyd George was Minister of Munitions until the tragical death of Lord Kitchener in June, 1916, when he passed over to the War Office. During these twelve months he devoted his entire energies to the munitioning task. The enthusiasm he threw into the work seemed to infect the humblest toiler in the great organism. There was ample scope for his inspiring influence, for the humour and good humour which lubricated all friction and difference, for the mental and physical power which rejoices to break itself on a big task.

But drive and determination are not always qualified and directed, as they were in Mr. Lloyd George, with the spirit of patience and wisdom. The Minister of Munitions realized at the outset of his task that guns, and especially ammunition and shells, could not be obtained merely by ordering, as by the waving of a magician's wand. He knew that it was not enough to give the order. He had to provide the man who received it with the plant and the labour, to follow up the work process by process, and to provide from beginning to end everything that was necessary. That was the conception which Mr. Lloyd George carried with him from the Treasury to the embryo Ministry of Munitions, and he proceeded steadily in the light of that cardinal principle.

For example, it was necessary at once to establish these national factories, but it must be long before they began

SHELLS AND GAUGES

actually to produce munitions. The factories had to be built, provided with machine-tools, which had mostly to be manufactured, provided with raw material of all kinds, staffed with labour which had to be recruited and trained to its work. It needed faith and patience to lay well and truly and without undue haste these needful foundations.

To most of the myriads employed in this work* it was quite unfamiliar. Moreover, it was highly technical and complicated. The rifle, apparently a simple weapon, may be cited as an instance of this minute elaboration. It requires, we are told, in the manufacture over a thousand different machines and fifteen hundred operations, and all these machines have themselves to be originally manufactured. The 6-inch gas shell had to pass two Government and three factory inspections. The same shell, as it passed from lathe to lathe, bench to bench, had to be parted at the base end, sandblasted, faced for centring, centred, rough-turned, bored, cut to length, weighted, cut to weight, proved and waved, copper banded; it had to be drilled with a small hole at the side for filling, fitted with its nose bush, weighed again, air-tested.† All calibres of shells had constantly to be gauged; and the gauge itself had to be closely examined and tested by engineers in the tool-room.

In fact, the gauges were no small problem in themselves. Mr. Montagu informed the House of Commons that the average type of shell requires 30 gauges, a percussion fuse 100 gauges, and a time fuse 240 gauges. All these had to fit accurately to within less than a thousandth part of an inch. It is wonderful that all the minute contributory processes in shell-making, requiring the utmost technical precision, were accomplished by girls and women and what is known as unskilled labour. It was the subdivision of labour alone that made the feat possible. Mr. Lloyd

* Mr. Montagu placed the number employed on munitions in August, 1916, at 2,250,000.

† "The Great Munition Feat": George A. B. Dewar, p. 110.

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George himself set an example to his employees, for he apprenticed himself patiently to the mystery of munition-making, and before he transferred his task to another was a master craftsman in most of the practical departments of the industry.

Faith and patience had at last their reward. The stream of munitions, fed by a thousand tributaries, grew deeper and broader until it was directed with devastating effect on the enemy's trenches in what was our first great offensive, that of the Somme in the summer and autumn of 1916. Not till then was the harvest reaped of the seed which Mr. Lloyd George and his helpers sowed in the early days of the munition campaign twelve months before. In the preliminary work of those operations, fifty thousand tons of ammunition, mainly high explosive, were poured from seventeen hundred guns along a front of fourteen miles. Ammunition was still not too plentiful, and there were still too many "blinds" and "prematures," but for the first time since the war began we had ammunition, in Sir Douglas Haig's official words, "approximately adequate to the conduct of major operations." Well may Mr. Lloyd George have exclaimed in the House of Commons (August 15th, 1916) on the peril we had escaped and scarcely even realized, and on the way in which, providentially for us, the Germans had missed their opportunities. When they came to learn to what extent they had missed them, they would have some unhappy quarters of an hour.

A vivid idea of what the Ministry accomplished during the first year of its activity may be gleaned from Mr. Montagu's statement in the House of Commons just after he had succeeded Mr. Lloyd George as Minister. Taking shells first, the output which in 1914-15 it took twelve whole months to produce could be obtained in August, 1916, in the following periods: 18-pounder ammunition, 3 weeks; field howitzer ammunition, 2 weeks; medium-sized shell, 11 days; heavy shell, 4 days. Taking all gun and howitzer

INCREASED OUTPUT OF MUNITIONS

ammunition together they were now manufacturing and issuing to France every week as much as the whole pre-war stock of land service ammunition in the country.

As to artillery, they were turning out in a month nearly as many big guns as were in existence for land service when the Ministry started. The monthly output of heavy guns increased more than sixfold between June, 1915, and June, 1916, and they were on the way towards doubling the existing rate of output. In machine-guns, in which, at first, we were so dangerously outnumbered, the weekly output had increased, since the Ministry was founded, fourteenfold, and was still increasing. It was anticipated that the entire requirement of the British Army would soon be satisfied, and British machine-gun makers might turn exclusively to supplying the Allies. It may be mentioned that the number of these little death-sprayers manufactured in this country during the war is estimated at a quarter of a million.

In rifles, nearly three times as many new ones were accepted in the first year of the Ministry's life as in 1914-15. The number of rifles manufactured in this country in the three or four years amounted to 4 millions. It is worth adding that the entire equipment of the British Army in rifles and machine-guns during the war was furnished from home sources alone. As regards the new weapons for trench warfare, the output of bombs increased thirty-three fold between May, 1915, and May, 1916.

The home production of small-arms ammunition was three times as great in August, 1916, as a year before. All the demands of the War Office had been met and anxiety for the future removed by the building up of a large reserve stock. Ten thousand million rounds of ammunition for rifle and machine-guns are said to have been turned out in this country during the war. Then as to high explosives, the production was 66 times as much as at the beginning of 1915, and the weekly consumption was between 11,000

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and 12,000 times the amount required for the land service manufactured in September, 1914.

And England was meeting in many departments much more than her own necessities. Mr. Montagu informed the House that one-third of the British production of shell steel was being sent to France. Twenty per cent. also of the machine-tool production at that time was also destined for the Allies, who were largely supplied by this country in many kinds of finished munitions of war. Thus it may be claimed that our munition workers had a real part in the great victories won by the French, Italian and Russian armies.

Such, briefly, was the nation's record in the fashioning of engines of death and destruction, mainly for one year, in the twentieth century of the Christian era. But there was no alternative. To do less than our utmost was to betray, as we believed, the cause of liberty and justice. That the nation rose to its full responsibilities must largely be credited to Mr. Lloyd George. But we must not forget his many able and powerful assistants—Mr. Eric Geddes, Mr. G. M. Booth, Colonel Glynn-West, Mr. Charles Ellis, Mr. Ernest Moir, Lord Moulton, Dr. Addison, the great company of experts and men of business who gave themselves without reserve to the work.

But Mr. Lloyd George stands as the personal representative of this mighty national endeavour. He was truly the "pulse of the machine," and the impression made on the people by his great services had its effect in the political changes that took place at the end of 1916. His work has indeed been fully recognized by the most competent authorities. Conspicuous among these is Lord French, the Commander-in-Chief who suffered most directly and poignantly from the official ignorance and ineptitude with regard to munitions in the early days of the war. It was he who shocked the nation and the politicians from their complacency. But it was the then Chancellor of the

LORD FRENCH'S TRIBUTE

Exchequer who grasped the full significance of that revelation and forced the nation into a sense and into the fulfilment of its duty.

It is impossible to gainsay the tribute paid by the soldier to the statesman. "My official correspondence with the War Office," writes Lord French in his valuable book '1914,' which he dedicated to Mr. Lloyd George, "dates from this time (September, 1914), and continued right up to June, 1915, when at last Mr. Lloyd George came to the rescue and entered upon his career of patriotic salvation. Britons all over the world will ever remember this distinguished statesman with the utmost gratitude as one of the greatest of their Empire's sons. Only those who were in any degree associated with Mr. Lloyd George in this time of trial can fully realize the awful responsibility which rested upon him, and the difficult nature of the problem he had to solve. His work was done in face of a dead weight of senseless but powerful opposition, all of which he had to undermine and overcome."

And again he writes : "The Coalition Government was formed, with Mr. Lloyd George as Minister of Munitions ; and, though delays afterwards occurred, the problem was at last faced with the intelligence and energy that its gravity demanded, and I feel that for his work on munitions we owe unmeasured gratitude to Mr. Lloyd George. The successful solution of the problem came when he applied to it that matchless energy which has enabled him to come through the great ordeal as England's most valued leader in her direst hour."

Mr. Lloyd George has many enemies. His motives and methods are continually and adversely criticised. Histories of the war have appeared in which his services are belittled in the narrowest spirit of political partisanship. But nothing can invalidate this free and spontaneous tribute paid by the Commander-in-Chief of the British armies to the British statesman ; a tribute which, besides, is fully justified by

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historic facts and documentary evidence. And Lord French's words are corroborated by the more specific eulogy pronounced on Mr. Lloyd George and his work by his successor, Mr. Montagu,* in his record of the Ministry's achievement. Mr. Lloyd George's "tireless energy and vigorous personality were the inspiration of the whole vast fabric." Even "that crafty and insidious animal the statesman or politician," in Adam Smith's caustic phrase, has a right to justice from the biographer and the historian.

* Speech in the House of Commons, Aug. 15, 1916.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HIGHEST PLACE

MR. LLOYD GEORGE became Secretary of State for War soon after the opening of our first and tremendous offensive on the Somme River. The drowning of Lord Kitchener on June 5th, 1916, was an event the impression of which almost stilled for a moment the noise and fury of war. The passing of a spirit so distinguished in a manner so sudden and tragical struck the imagination of foe and friend alike. So singular was the popular deification of this enigmatic figure that legends and delusions of all sorts began to gather round the story of his death, and some may still be left who confidently expect his return or his resurrection. But Lord Kitchener's great contribution to the British cause had been well accomplished before his death, and in some respects he must be accounted *felix opportunitate*.

There was much in the practical methods, and still more in the traditional spirit, of the War Office which a statesman of Mr. Lloyd George's character and record must have wished to reform away. The very idea of the popular tribune being placed at the head of the most conservative and impenetrable of all public departments would a few years earlier have occasioned a smile. But Mr. Lloyd George was not at that office more than six months, and he scarcely played the part of a cleansing torrent diverted through the encumbered stable.

But Mr. Lloyd George has never shown any liking for the "fat slumbers" of a sinecure, and the War Office, though shorn of some of its important functions by the creation of the Ministry of Munitions and other influences,

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was at this time the second position in the State, in point of dignity and responsibility. Mr. Lloyd George must always leave his stamp on any position he occupies, whether it be the Board of Trade or the Treasury or the War Office, and he marked his short tenure of the last by important developments in the railways at the rear of our armies in France. This construction of a better system of lateral lines was necessary to the sudden assault at unexpected points in the line which was so important a feature in the tactics of trench-warfare. He was eccentric enough to commit this task of railway development to a practical railway man, and Sir Eric Geddes suddenly blossomed out as a general in charge of transportation at Headquarters. This step was not effected without a good deal of opposition, but the Secretary of State had his way, much to the advantage of our Armies' convenience and efficiency.

But the most significant and fateful aspect of Mr. Lloyd George's succession to the Ministry for War was that it brought him right up to the boundary of the Premiership, suggesting the thought that he was destined some day to cross that line of ultimate ambition. Everything, in fact, during the last six months of 1916 conspired to advance Mr. Lloyd George to the highest seat in the commonwealth. Popular discontent was rising by a steady *crescendo*. The nation was getting out of patience with a war which had lasted already eighteen months longer than, according to the original forecast, it ought to have done, and the British people had scarcely enjoyed that *embarras de victoires* which made it difficult for Horace Walpole to keep abreast of the military triumphs of the British armies. In a letter to Sir Horace Mann from Strawberry Hill, dated July 23rd, 1761, the wit writes: "One cannot take the trouble of sending every victory by itself; I stay till I have enough to make a packet, and then write to you. On Monday last we learned the

PROGRESS OF THE WAR

conquest of Pondicherry, and away went a courier to Mr. Stanley to raise our terms. Before the man could get half-way, comes an account of the entire defeat of Broglie and Soubise."

Those were not the days of stubborn and featureless trench-warfare. But even what might be described as substantive and individual events had not been things, in the Chestertonian phrase, "to roll upon the ground about" in joy and triumph. The nation had been continuously disappointed in its desire for something decisive. The memories of 1915, of Serbia and the Dardanelles, were still acute, and the spring of 1916 had brought the unwelcome and damaging news of the fall of Kut, and the terrible stories of the medical service breakdown in Mesopotamia. A little later the Battle of Jutland, though it proved in the end to have been decisive in putting the German Fleet out of future action, had at the time fallen considerably short of being an actual bell-ringing affair. Then the submarine was becoming a deadly danger, and the Admiralty, over which Mr. Balfour presided, seemed unable to prevent or to punish the assaults of German cruisers on our seaside resorts.

As autumn followed summer, the results of our appallingly sacrificial offensive on the Somme began to appear more and more inadequate. By the time those operations ended towards the beginning of winter the British casualty list numbered 420,000, the French 250,000, and the enemy 720,000. And even worse humiliation was coming in the sacrifice of another small nation who looked to the Allies for protection.

The people were staunch and patient, but they were not pleased. They could scarcely find compensation in the failure of the prolonged German attack on Verdun, in the subjugation of German East Africa, in the definite alignment of Greece with the Allies after the *coup d'état* of M. Venizelos. Nor could they look forward to the

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deferred harvest of the Somme battles in early 1917, when, as a result, the German grip was disengaged from hundreds of miles of French territory, or to the strenuous turn of the tide in Mesopotamia, under the auspices of Sir Charles Monro and Sir Stanley Maude. Nobody could know in this country, what we now know from the memoirs of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, that the German Army was on the point of breaking down, "utterly worn out," as Hindenburg expresses it. It was equally hidden from the farthest sighted vision that Russia was about to be eliminated from the struggle and that the Allies were to be abundantly compensated by the entrance into the war of the United States of America. To most people, as the year 1916 grew older, the past seemed to be full of failure and disappointment, and the future enveloped in doubt and gloom.

The Rumanian disaster contributed still further to this tone of mind. Rumania had hitherto kept out of the *mêlée*, though it was obvious that her interests and sympathies were engaged on the side of the Allies. Northwards across the Carpathians there was a large "Rumania irredenta," in which four million Rumanians lived under Magyar oppression. That was an injustice which the defeat and downfall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would set right, and in the secret treaty relating to her intervention Rumania was promised Transylvania in the settlement as the reward of her entrance into the war. But apart from this, there were many reasons why Rumania should take that step on her own responsibility.

The considerations which had hitherto withheld her seemed to be removed when she declared war on Austria-Hungary on August 27th, 1916. It seemed no longer certain that Germany would win the war, or at any rate win it so decisively as to impose terms on her enemies. The Germans had been thwarted at Verdun, Brussiloff's advance across the Carpathians was prospering, Russia

RUMANIA ENTERS THE WAR

seemed to be driving the Turks before her in Asia Minor, and a strong Allied force, capable of giving effective assistance, was operating in the country round Salonica. It was much to be desired that Rumania should be able at the peace which seemed to be approaching to corroborate her claims in Transylvania by the merit of having risked something for the Allies and the advantage if possible of being actually in occupation of the debatable land.

This is one very intelligible reason why Rumania, having decided to come in, struck northwards into Hungary rather than southwards to Sofia. Rumania had no political *casus belli* against Bulgaria. It was rather Bulgaria who had a case against her in the many thousands of Bulgars subjected to Rumanian rule in the Dobrudja. Rumania might very well hope that Bulgaria would remain neutral towards herself. Another strong motive for moving northwards was that the existing northern frontier of Rumania was over 700 miles in length, extremely vulnerable to an enemy holding internal lines, whereas a much shorter and more defensive line might be found farther north along the course of the River Maros.* But indeed this discussion is rather otiose, for it was provided in the Treaty of August 16th that the Bulgarian movement should be towards Buda-Pesth.

Rumania had no sooner taken the bold step on August 27th than she found herself overwhelmed with declarations of war. Germany declared war on her with decisive punctuality on August 28th, Turkey on August 30th, and Bulgaria on September 1st. For a fortnight after the Rumanian bonnets were over the border things went fairly but delusively well. Transylvania was penetrated to a depth of fifty miles. Important towns were captured. It seemed that Rumania might succeed in establishing the Maros line far in advance of her political frontier.

This Rumanian adventure excited great sympathy

* See "A Short History of the Great War," A. F. Pollard, pp. 229-230.

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in England. Many people to whom Rumania had been merely a geographical name began to be interested in a little country which represented the fashion and elegance of Western civilization in the heart of the Magyar and Slavonic world. None of the "flag days" which were so conspicuous a feature of the war evoked such a lavish response as that devoted in October to the cause of Rumania, at a time when the iron circle was closing round the plucky little state.

At the beginning of September the sun seemed to shine auspiciously on the Rumanian enterprise. There was little anticipation of the disaster ahead. Yet there were ominous precedents. Belgium, Servia, Montenegro had gone under. Were the Allies likely to give effectual protection to another little people far more remote and inaccessible, at least to the Western Powers? Could Russia, whose business it was first and foremost to co-operate with Rumania, be trusted to do so? As the sequel showed, Russia entirely failed to meet her responsibilities. Munitions of war intended for Rumania were intercepted for Russian use and put to no effective purpose. Russia's obvious duty and interest, so soon as Rumania had declared for the Allies, was to march her troops through the Dobrudja into Bulgaria with a view to cutting the "corridor" from Belgrade to Constantinople, joining hands with the Allies moving from Salonica, and effectually isolating Turkey. Such strategy had been hitherto impossible for Russia because a neutral Rumania blocked the southward access. But now the obstacle was removed, and yet Russia failed to use the opportunity. The explanation probably is that her internal malady was now advancing rapidly towards the crisis which made subsequent proceedings in the European war no longer interesting to her. But whatever the reason and excuse, Russia has to bear the main responsibility for the disaster to Rumania.

ANXIETY ABOUT RUMANIA

To Mr. Lloyd George, always super-sensitive about the fortunes of little states, the Bulgarian challenge of Rumania brought a live anxiety. From the moment Rumania entered the war he seems to have been stricken with a fear that she also was doomed to destruction, and he began at once to urge that the strongest possible measures should be taken to avert the calamity. As early as September 4th he put in a memorandum to the Prime Minister on the subject which, in the light of what afterwards happened, can only be regarded as a very remarkable instance of statesmanlike prevision. It is said that Mr. Lloyd George himself takes some pride in this document, and that a good many persons read it or knew its purport. Mr. Lloyd George wrote thus :

WAR OFFICE,

September 4th, 1916.

I have just seen the telegrams announcing the declaration of war by Bulgaria against Roumania. This is an additional ground for the anxiety which I expressed to you on Saturday as to the possibilities in the immediate future in the Balkans. I then expressed some apprehension that Hindenburg, who has strong Eastern proclivities, and has always been opposed to the concentration of Germanic forces in the West, would direct his attention to the crushing of Roumania, and that we ought to be thinking out every practicable plan for giving effective support to Roumania in the event of her being heavily attacked. We cannot afford another Serbian tragedy. We were warned early in 1915 that the Germans meant, in confederation with the Bulgars, to wipe Serbia out. In spite of that fact, when the attack came we had not purchased a single mule to aid the Serbians through Salonika. The result was, when our troops landed there, owing to lack of equipment

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and appropriate transport they could not go inland and Serbia was crushed.

I hope that we shall not allow the same catastrophe to befall Roumania through lack of timely forethought.

There are three disquieting facts in the situation :—

1. Hindenburg's well-known Eastern inclinations.

2. The declaration of war by Bulgaria against Roumania. I cannot believe Ferdinand would have taken this risk where it was quite unnecessary, unless he had received substantial guarantees of German assistance in the attack on Roumania.

3. The slackening of the German attack on Verdun. Hindenburg will certainly give up this foolish attack at the earliest possible opportunity. The abandonment of this operation will release hundreds of heavy guns and hundreds of thousands of good troops. If in addition to this he were prepared gradually to give ground on the Somme, making us pay for it as he retires, he could transfer several more divisions from the West to the East. He could give up four or five times as much ground as we have won during the past two months without surrendering any vital positions.

4. I can hardly think that the equipment of the Roumanian Army would enable it long to resist an attack from an Austro-Germanic-Bulgarian force, armed with hundreds of heavy guns and supplied with enormous quantities of heavy shell. The Roumanians are very scantily supplied with heavy guns, and I doubt whether their supplies of ammunition are sufficient to enable them to get through a continuous fight lasting over several weeks.

I therefore once more urge that the General Staff should carefully consider what action we could, in conjunction with France and Italy, take immediately to relieve the pressure on Roumania if a formidable

RUMANIA NOT REINFORCED

attack developed against her. There may be nothing in my fears, but no harm could be done by being prepared for all contingencies.

Signed—D. LLOYD GEORGE.

The danger to Rumania and Mr. Lloyd George's pressure for effectual help opened again the old controversy between the Westerners and the Easterners. The soldiers, represented by Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial Staff, were Western in opinion and sympathy. Their interest was concentrated on the miles of embattled front along which our armies faced the Germans in France. They were generally without the imaginative vision which could survey the war as a whole, and devise strategic plans more subtle and comprehensive than an endless series of frontal attacks upon barbed wire and concrete. In his efforts to obtain speedy and sufficient support for Rumania Mr. Lloyd George came up roughly against this stolid professional mentality. And Mr. Asquith, unaffected and perhaps a little irritated by his chief colleague's emotional crises, came down, as usual, quite decisively on the soldiers' side.

The disappointment was made much worse by the War Minister's experience in France. M. Briand, the French Prime Minister, had been a strong supporter of Mr. Lloyd George's original Salonica scheme, which, if adopted, might have obviated all these dangers and humiliations in the Near East. Now again he was ready to back the British statesman's suggestion for a joint expedition in aid of Rumania. The British Ministers for War and Munitions had met the corresponding French Ministers in September, and decisions had been taken in favour of "the most effective employment of the joint military resources of France and Britain." But the resistance of the British military authorities and the passive deference of Mr. Asquith to professional opinion made

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it impossible for Mr. Lloyd George to fulfil his part in the contract. One may imagine the perplexity in French Governmental circles and the chagrin and sense of frustration felt by a man in such deadly earnest as was Mr. Lloyd George at this moment.

Very little was done to help Rumania, and nothing promptly. Some more troops were sent to Salonica, but these and the other Allied forces were engaged in operations towards Monastir, which had no precise relation to the urgently needed advance on Sofia and Bukharest. No serious attempt was made to bring help to Rumania. The military mind knew and cared little about that remote country which seemed to lie wholly within the Russian and not the British responsibility.

It is not necessary in these pages to tell the story how unerringly Mr. Lloyd George's ill forebodings were fulfilled. Germany, sure of her new victim, was in no hurry to strike the blow. She made her preparations deliberately, and they were made on a scale which, if our military magnates thought at all on the subject, must have greatly surprised them. The battles of the Somme, and especially Brussiloff's Galician offensive, were absorbing enormous German forces. Yet in spite of the pressure on East and West and the intermediate campaign against Italy, Germany was able to send eight divisions, with an Alpine corps of Bavarians and unlimited supplies of guns and munitions and aeroplanes, to the Rumanian war, all under the command of von Falkenhayn. The Rumanians were driven out of the territory they had occupied north of their own border, and on September 26th the Bavarian corps captured the Roterturm Pass leading into the Rumanian state. South of the Danube, Mackensen marched eastwards towards the Dobrudja. Everywhere the Rumanians fought with courage and skill and tenacity. But they were steadily outflanked on both wings. Bukharest fell on December 5th, and before

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER

the end of the year the Rumanian armies with their inadequate Russian auxiliaries had fallen back on the borders of Moldavia, the only province left to Rumania. The subjugation of the country had been attended by fewer atrocities than the previous conquest of Servia, but it was complete and left a similar impression on the mind and spirit of the Allied peoples, especially the British.

The Rumanian disaster brought to a head the gathering British discontent with the conduct of the war and the desire for a change in the supreme control. Well in advance of the immediate incidents which brought on the political crisis the nation had subconsciously nominated Mr. Lloyd George to that high function. It had been impressed with his great crusade and his tremendous organizing feat in connexion with the supply of munitions. It had also become a general impression that, while he was formally responsible for all the British failures in the war, he had always been virtually in opposition in the Cabinet. It was on the lips of thousands throughout the country that if Mr. Lloyd George's advice had been taken, bitter humiliations not a few would have been avoided.

There was no pronounced demand for a head, or for a scapegoat to be sent into the wilderness. "Asquith must go" scarcely crystallized into a formulary. The Prime Minister had deserved well in many respects of his country. It was largely through his wise diplomacy that Italy had been brought into the war. He had held the Coalition together with wonderful tact and skill. He had brought Cabinet and country round to conscription without the acute divisions which such a policy seemed to threaten. Even the Rumanian disaster was not so directly chargeable to British as to Russian deficiencies. It might well be questioned whether Mr. Lloyd George's pro-Rumanian propaganda was practical politics, and whether Mr. Asquith could have done anything in the

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teeth of military opposition. Moreover, as already suggested, the military situation was far more favourable to the Allied cause than the nation could surmise at this time.

But the net resultant of the nation's impressions and experiences down to the autumn of 1916 was that it desired a change in the conduct of the war, and its mind and will had already insensibly turned towards Mr. Lloyd George. As for that statesman, it is not surprising that he should have come, like the Earl of Chatham, to regard himself as the one and only possible saviour of his country. It is not surprising that he should have been willing to take extreme measures, just as Chatham turned to a deal with Newcastle, in order to obtain for himself a less obstructed influence on the national policy.

The national discontent at this time was reflected in the psychology of the House of Commons. There was a widely spread opinion that Mr. Asquith's War Committee was not working efficiently in the best interest of the nation.* Both the Unionist and the Liberal parties had formed groups in Parliament whose object was to observe and criticize the Government. The leading spirit of the Unionist opposition was Sir Edward Carson, who a year ago had resigned his office because the Government would not deal more drastically with Greece or send efficient help to Servia. The Ulster Irishman and the Welsh statesman were on the main questions of policy sympathetic souls. Mr. Asquith's Cabinet was subject to persistent attack from these Parliamentary critics, and, as we have seen, Mr. Lloyd George was in chronic opposition inside that body.

By the autumn of 1916 it had been decreed by the

* This Committee consisted of seven members, Messrs. Asquith, Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Balfour, McKenna, Montagu and Lord Curzon. It was a Committee of the Cabinet with decisions subject to confirmation by the full Ministerial body of twenty-three. It controlled the conduct of the war from day to day, the Cabinet automatically ratifying its acts. But it had expanded, with its official advisers and regular Ministerial visitors, into almost as cumbrous a body as the Cabinet itself. It might be said that there were two Cabinets sitting side by side and taking a hand in the war.

DISSATISFACTION WITH PRIME MINISTER

higher destinies that Mr. Asquith, whatever his merits or demerits, should vacate the first place for Mr. Lloyd George. Only the opportunity or Aristotle's "trifling occasion" was wanting to convert this abstract decision into a material fact. It arrived from a very remote region, from that proverbial source of the new and unexpected, the continent of Africa. By this time the British administrations of various tropical colonies, in which the Germans had always enjoyed the open door, had come into possession of many German properties. This was the case in Nigeria, where, in November, the governor offered for sale various palm-growing estates, with their buildings and other fixtures, which had belonged to enemy subjects. He acted on the commercially applied principle *palnam qui meruit ferat*, "let those who can pay have the goods."

But this impartiality was not to the taste of a large section of Unionists in the House of Commons, who thought the bidding for these palm-kernel properties ought to be restricted to British subjects. So it happened that the sale of certain businesses in the steaming watershed of the Niger blew up a crisis in our British politics which displaced a Government and affected for all time the course of our political history.

For the issue was carried to a division in the House of Commons, in which sixty Unionists voted against the Government, and seventy-one, including, however, fifteen office-holders, for the Government. This was open revolt, significant of growing discontent with the Government, and threatening the life of the administration, in particular the position of Mr. Bonar Law. That statesman—who, it has been suggested, was to play the part of Newcastle to Mr. Lloyd George's Chatham, though there was little resemblance in moral character between the two men—had promised his Unionist friends, when he took office under the Coalition in 1915, that if ever he lost their

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confidence he would resign. That condition now seemed perilously near fulfilment, and Mr. Bonar Law, looking deeper than the palm-kernel incident, thought it desirable that something should be done to give greater security to the Government, especially in the direction of improving the machinery for the conduct of the war.

At this time there were several vessels of high horse-powered engines and big tonnage steering independent and ineffectual courses about the political seas. Mr. Lloyd George, we are told,* had "drifted apart" from Mr. Bonar Law, and so also had Sir Edward Carson, though the interests of these gentlemen were really identical. The pilot who should bring these wandering craft together and combine them into an effective flotilla was found in the person of Lord Beaverbrook, then Sir Max Aitken, a Canadian financier with a genius for merging not only industrial concerns but diverging personalities whose *rapprochement* was for important reasons desirable. We need not intrude into the social, political and festive gatherings of the little camarilla thus formed. It is uncertain that Mr. Asquith's replacement by Mr. Lloyd George was definitely and from the first the object of its operations. Mr. Bonar Law at any rate seems to have still regarded Mr. Asquith as the only possible head who could keep together the various members of the Coalition organism.

But the Unionist leader went forward towards his object of strengthening the machinery of Government for war purposes. On November 18th, 1916, he proposed to Mr. Asquith a plan which was "simplicity itself." The new War Council was to consist of Mr. Law, Sir Edward Carson, and Mr. Lloyd George, with Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister, in supreme control, however that was to be effected. Mr. Asquith turned that proposition down. A week later Mr. Law amended it by proposals for a real

* See the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1919, for an excellent account of these events.

PROPOSAL FOR A WAR CABINET

War Cabinet of civilian ministers sitting daily for no other purpose than to carry on the war. Of this Cabinet or Council Mr. Asquith was to be President, and Mr. Lloyd George Chairman, though acting as President in the Prime Minister's absence. There was to be no derogation from the full power and dignity of the Prime Minister, who could refer any question to the full Cabinet and had thus the supreme control of policy. This scheme also was disapproved by Mr. Asquith, who seems at this time to have been greatly perplexed by the problems multiplying on his hands and by the conflicting currents of opinion which embarrassed his steersmanship. It should also be recorded that the war had brought him a terrible bereavement which greatly oppressed his spirit at this time. He seems to have been especially uncertain about the attitude and intention of Mr. Lloyd George.

But the constitutional question was now to be discussed between the two men most directly and personally concerned in these events. We gather from Mr. Lloyd George's memorandum of December 1st that he had previously had comprehensive talks with his chief on these subjects of high politics. The memorandum gives us the gist of what Mr. Lloyd George had proposed. It ran thus :

December 1st, 1916.

MEMO. TO PRIME MINISTER

1. That the War Committee consist of three members—two of whom must be the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Secretary of State for War, who should have in their offices deputies capable of attending to and deciding all Department business—and a third Minister without portfolio. One of the three to be Chairman.

2. That the War Committee shall have full powers, subject to the supreme control of the Prime Minister, to direct all questions connected with the war.

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3. The Prime Minister in his discretion to have the power to refer any question to the Cabinet.

4. Unless the Cabinet, on reference by the Prime Minister, reverses the decision of the War Committee, that decision to be carried out by the Department concerned.

5. The War Committee to have the power to invite any Minister and to summon the expert advisers and officers of any Department to its meetings.

To this reminder Mr. Asquith replied on the same day :

(Secret)

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

December 1st, 1916.

MY DEAR LLOYD GEORGE,—

I have now had time to reflect on our conversation this morning, and to study your memorandum.

Though I do not altogether share your dark estimate and forecast of the situation, actual and prospective, I am in complete agreement that we have reached a critical situation in the war, and that our own methods of procedure, with the experience which we have gained during the last few months, call for reconsideration and revision.

The two main defects of the War Committee, which has done excellent work, are (1) that its numbers are too large ; (2) that there is delay, evasion, and often obstruction, on the part of the Departments in giving effect to its decisions. I might with good reason add (3) that it is often kept in ignorance by the Departments of information, essential and even vital, of a technical kind, upon the problems that come before it, and (4) that it is overcharged with duties, many of which might well be delegated to subordinate bodies.

MR. ASQUITH'S OPINION

The result is that I am clearly of opinion that the War Committee should be reconstituted, and its relations to and authority over the Departments, etc., more clearly defined and more effectively asserted.

I now come to your specific proposals. In my opinion, whatever changes are made in the composition or functions of the War Committee, the Prime Minister must be Chairman. He cannot be relegated to the position of an arbiter in the background or a referee to the Cabinet.

In regard to its composition, I agree that the War Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty are necessary members. I am inclined to add to the same category the Minister of Munitions. There should be another member, either without portfolio or charged only with comparatively light departmental duties. One of the members should be appointed Vice-Chairman.

I purposely in this letter do not discuss the delicate and difficult question of personnel.

The Committee should, as far as possible, sit *de die in diem*, and have full power to see that its decisions (subject to appeal to the Cabinet) are carried out promptly and effectively by the Departments.

The reconstruction of the War Committee should be accompanied by the setting up of a Committee of National Organization, to deal with the purely domestic side of war problems. It should have executive powers within its own domain.

The Cabinet would in all cases have ultimate authority.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed)—H. H. ASQUITH.

It will be noted that there were two main questions at issue between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Asquith—

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the relation of the Prime Minister to the proposed new War Council and the personnel of the Council.

In the meantime the controversy had found its way into the newspapers, Lord Beaverbrook's organ the *Daily Express* giving a forecast of the new War Cabinet on Saturday, and *Reynolds's Newspaper*, controlled by Mr. Lloyd George's friend and supporter, Sir Henry (afterwards Lord) Dalziel, announcing Mr. Lloyd George's approaching resignation on account of "the methods of dilatoriness, indecision, and delay which characterize the action of the present War Council," and which, "in his opinion, endanger the prospects of winning the war." These newspaper comments at once heightened the controversy, which had been chiefly private, into a parliamentary and public crisis.

Sunday was a great day for the quidnuncs of the political clubs. That morning Conservative Ministers knocked at Mr. Bonar Law's house door and had a palaver within. These gentlemen were still in favour of Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister, but they advised him to strengthen his position by resigning and reconstructing his Ministry. In order to fortify this advice, Mr. Bonar Law was authorized to tender to Mr. Asquith the resignation of himself and his Unionist colleagues.

The two protagonists in the controversy had gone into the country, Mr. Asquith to Walmer Castle, and Mr. Lloyd George to Walton Heath, for the week-end, but the crisis recalled them both on the Sunday. The Prime Minister had conversations with Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Lloyd George. In response to the former (who, however, withheld the threat of a Unionist resignation) Mr. Asquith did not see how he would help matters by himself resigning. On the Sunday and the Monday a compromised agreement on the question of the War Committee seems almost to have been reached. The Committee was to consist of five members, with Mr. Lloyd George

THE ARTICLE IN THE *TIMES*

as Chairman. The Prime Minister would attend when he pleased, and preside when he did. The Chairman was to report to him daily, and a power of veto would be his. This was almost Mr. Bonar Law's proposal of November. It seemed to maintain the power and dignity of the Premiership. Mr. Asquith did not consent to dismiss Mr. Balfour from the Admiralty, which was an article in the programme of the reformers, or to include in the War Committee Sir Edward Carson, equally a *sine qua non* with the innovators.

When Mr. Asquith dined that evening with Mr. Montagu, it seemed likely that the crisis would be safely overpassed. So much so that he issued to the Press the same evening from the house of his host a notice which appeared prominently in the next day's papers: "The Prime Minister, with a view to the more effective prosecution of the war, has decided to advise His Majesty the King to consent to a reconstruction of the Government."

But the *Times* of Monday (December 4th) contained a good deal more than these official tidings. This great organ was now under Lord Northcliffe's control. One of the successful operations of Sir Max Aitken, we are told, had been to reconcile Mr. Lloyd George with the famous newspaper *entrepreneur*, with whom he had had a little coolness. Lord Northcliffe was therefore initiated into all the secrets of the camarilla. He donned the hood and the stiletto, and on the Monday morning, in the language of a writer in *The Atlantic Monthly*,* used the information he obtained "not to support Mr. Lloyd George, but to stab Mr. Asquith." The Prime Minister was represented as having consented unto his own political effacement. In its leading article the *Times* said:

The gist of Mr. Lloyd George's proposal is understood to be the establishment forthwith of a small

* For February, 1919.

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War Council, fully charged with the supreme direction of the war. Of this Council Mr. Asquith himself is not to be a member—the assumption being that the Prime Minister has sufficient cares of a more general character without devoting himself wholly, as the new Council must be devoted if it is to be effective, to the daily task of organizing victory . . . The Prime Minister has decided for reconstruction . . . We assume that he consents in principle to Mr. Lloyd George's proposals. The conversion has been swift, but Mr. Asquith has never been slow to note political tendencies when they become inevitable. The testimony of his closest supporters . . . must have convinced him by this time that matters cannot possibly go on as at present. They must have convinced him, too, that his own qualities are fitted better, as they are fond of saying, to "preserve the unity of the nation" (though we have never doubted its unity) than to force the pace of a War Council.

The article went on to repudiate the suggestions of "intrigue" and "personal ambition" as the origin of the new movement. "If personal ambition counted for anything, no man in his senses would seek to gratify it at such a time by risking a great position which is almost untouched by the general unpopularity of the Government." It ended with a pronounced eulogy of the War Minister. "From the very beginning he has stood apart from the rest in his unmistakable enthusiasm for vigorous war. The Celtic temperament is apt to concentrate on a single passion, and Mr. Lloyd George has somehow succeeded in impressing even the bitterest of his old opponents with his complete abandonment of every other thought beside the passion for victory. It was only a question of time before he found it impossible to work with the old digressive colleagues under the old unwieldy

MR. ASQUITH'S LETTER

system. No elaborate theory is needed to account for his revolt. Nor, for the matter of that, is the country at large under any illusions about it."

On December 8th at a Liberal meeting held at the Reform Club, Mr. Asquith interpreted the correspondence afterwards published. We must in fairness regard him as considering his final decision on the proposals made to him when the *Times* dropped its bomb. Up to then he had given no definite answer, but the *Times* article confirmed him in his opinion about the relationship of the Prime Minister to the proposed Committee. His summary in the following letter of the proposed agreement must not, it seems, be treated as a confirmation of a preceding approval :

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

December 4th, 1916.

MY DEAR LLOYD GEORGE,—

Such productions as the first leading article in to-day's *Times*, showing the infinite possibilities for misunderstanding and misrepresentation of such an arrangement as we considered yesterday, make me at least doubtful as to its feasibility. Unless the impression is at once corrected, that I am being relegated to the position of an irresponsible spectator of the war, I cannot possibly go on.

The suggested arrangement was to the following effect: the Prime Minister to have supreme and effective control of War Policy. The agenda of the War Committee will be submitted to him; its Chairman will report to him daily; he can direct it to consider particular topics or proposals; but all its conclusions will be subject to his approval or veto. He can, of course, at his own discretion, attend meetings of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)—H. H. ASQUITH.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

This letter elicited an almost momentary reply from Mr. Lloyd George :

WAR OFFICE, WHITEHALL, S.W.

December 4th, 1916.

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,—

I have not seen the *Times* article, but I hope you will not attach undue importance to these effusions. I have had these misrepresentations to put up with for months. Northcliffe frankly wants a smash. Derby and I do not. Northcliffe would like to make this and any other re-arrangement under your Premiership impossible. Derby and I attach great importance to your retaining your present position—effectively. I cannot restrain or, I fear, influence Northcliffe. I fully accept in letter and in spirit your summary of the suggested arrangement—subject of course to personnel.

Ever sincerely,

(Signed)—D. LLOYD GEORGE.

This letter, it will be noticed, is scarcely consistent with the information that Lord Northcliffe had been admitted to the inner councils of the revolt. Yet how, otherwise, did he obtain the material published in the *Times*?

At what point Mr. Asquith began to think that he was the victim of “a well-organized, carefully engineered conspiracy,” as he afterwards expressed it,* is not certain. But at this stage in the proceedings, he tells us, he consulted his “oldest and most-valued friends,” who seem to have encouraged him to offer a bolder front to the mutineers. The following letter he addressed on the same day to his rebellious colleague is marked with a new clearness, dignity, and decision :

* Speech at the Reform Club, December 8.

THE QUESTION OF THE WAR COMMITTEE

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

December 4th, 1916.

MY DEAR LLOYD GEORGE,—

Thank you for your letter of this morning.

The King gave me to-day authority to ask and accept the resignation of all my colleagues, and to form a new Government on such lines as I should submit to him. I start therefore with a clean slate.

The first question which I have to consider is the constitution of the new War Committee.

After full consideration of the matter in all its aspects, I have come decidedly to the conclusion that it is not possible that such a Committee could be made workable and effective without the Prime Minister as its Chairman. I quite agree that it will be necessary for him, in view of the other calls upon his time and energy, to delegate from time to time the Chairmanship to another Minister as his representative and locum tenens; but (if he is to retain the authority which corresponds with his responsibility as Prime Minister) he must continue to be, as he always has been, its permanent President. I am satisfied, on reflection, that any other arrangement (such for instance as the one which I indicated to you in my letter of to-day) would be found in experience impracticable and incompatible with the retention of the Prime Minister's final and supreme control.

The other question, which you have raised, relates to the personnel of the Committee. Here again, after deliberate consideration, I find myself unable to agree with some of your suggestions. I think we both agree that the First Lord of the Admiralty must, of necessity, be a member of the Committee. I cannot (as I told you yesterday) be a party to any suggestion that Mr. Balfour should be displaced.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

The technical side of the Board of Admiralty has been reconstituted, with Sir John Jellicoe as First Sea Lord. I believe Mr. Balfour to be, under existing conditions, the necessary head of the Board.

I must add that Sir Edward Carson (for whom personally, and in every other way, I have the greatest regard) is not, from the only point of view which is significant to me (namely the most effective prosecution of the war), the man best qualified among my colleagues, present or past, to be a member of the War Committee.

I have only to say, in conclusion, that I am strongly of opinion that the War Committee (without any disparagement of the existing Committee, which in my judgment is a most efficient body, and has done, and is doing, valuable work) ought to be reduced in number, so that it can sit more frequently and overtake more easily the daily problems with which it has to deal. But in any reconstruction of the Committee, such as I have, and have for some time past had, in view, the governing consideration to my mind is the special capacity of the men who are to sit on it for the work which it has to do.

That is a question which I must reserve for myself to decide.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed)—H. H. ASQUITH.

The impartial critic must admit that there was nothing inconsistent in this letter with Mr. Asquith's attitude from the outset. "It is not correct to say," he afterwards explained, "that anything in the nature of an agreement was come to. On the contrary, the matter was left over" (i.e. from the Sunday) "for further consideration, and I undertook to make a written communication to him the next day, and I thought over the matter

MR. LLOYD GEORGE'S DEFENCE

most carefully and when I took up the newspaper next morning saw I was to be excluded."* The reader must decide for himself, but Mr. Lloyd George would seem to have been mistaken in his complaint that Mr. Asquith had gone back on his words. Mr. Lloyd George's reply on the next day was evidently written with an eye to eventual publication. It reviews his general policy on the war and justifies his recent action. It must likewise be transcribed in full because of its historic and personal interest :

WAR OFFICE, S.W.

December 5th, 1916.

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,—

I received your letter with some surprise. On Friday I made proposals which involved, not merely your retention of the Premiership, but the supreme control of the war, whilst the executive functions, subject to that supreme control, were left to others. I thought you then received these suggestions favourably. In fact you yourself proposed that I should be the Chairman of this Executive Committee, although, as you know, I never put forward that demand. On Saturday you wrote me a letter in which you completely went back on that proposition. You sent for me on Sunday and put before me other proposals: these proposals you embodied in a letter to me written on Monday:—

“ The Prime Minister to have supreme and effective control of War Policy ;

“ The agenda of the War Committee will be submitted to him ; its Chairman will report to him daily ; he can direct it to consider particular topics or proposals ; and all its conclusions will be subject to his approval or veto. He can, of course, at his own discretion, attend meetings of the Committee.”

* Reform Club Speech.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

These proposals safeguarded your position and power as Prime Minister in every particular. I immediately wrote you, accepting them "in letter and in spirit." It is true that on Sunday I expressed views as to the constitution of the Committee, but these were for discussion. To-day you have gone back on your own proposals.

I have striven my utmost to cure the obvious defects of the War Committee without overthrowing the Government. As you are aware, on several occasions during the last two years I have deemed it my duty to express profound dissatisfaction with the Government's method of conducting the war. Many a time, with the road to victory open in front of us, we have delayed and hesitated whilst the enemy were erecting barriers that finally checked the approach. There have been delay, hesitation, lack of forethought and vision. I have endeavoured repeatedly to warn the Government of the dangers, both verbally and in written memoranda and letters, which I crave your leave now to publish if my action is challenged; but I have either failed to secure decisions or I have secured them when it was too late to avert the evils. The latest illustration is our lamentable failure to give timely support to Rumania.

I have more than once asked to be released from my responsibility for a policy with which I was in thorough disagreement, but at your urgent personal request I remained in the Government. I realize that, when the country is in the peril of a great war, Ministers have not the same freedom to resign on disagreement. At the same time, I have always felt—and I felt deeply—that I was in a false position, inasmuch as I could never defend in a wholehearted manner the action of the Government of which I was a member. We have thrown away opportunity

MR. LLOYD GEORGE RESIGNS OFFICE

after opportunity, and I am convinced, after deep and anxious reflection, that it is my duty to leave the Government, in order to inform the people of the real condition of affairs and to give them an opportunity, before it is too late, to save their native land from a disaster which is inevitable if the present methods are longer persisted in. As all delay is fatal in war, I place my office without further parley at your disposal.

It is with great personal regret that I have come to this conclusion. In spite of mean and unworthy insinuations to the contrary—insinuations which I fear are always inevitable in the case of men who hold prominent but not primary positions in any Administration—I have felt a strong personal attachment to you as my chief. As you yourself said on Sunday, we have acted together for ten years and never had a quarrel, although we have had many a grave difference on questions of policy. You have treated me with great courtesy and kindness; for all that I thank you. Nothing would have induced me to part now except an overwhelming sense that the course of action which has been pursued has put the country—and not merely the country but, throughout the world, the principles for which you and I have always stood throughout our political lives—in the greatest peril that has ever overtaken them.

As I am fully conscious of the importance of preserving national unity, I propose to give your Government complete support in the vigorous prosecution of the war; but unity without action is nothing but futile carnage, and I cannot be responsible for that. Vigour and vision are the supreme need at this hour.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)—D. LLOYD GEORGE.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

It will be noted that Mr. Lloyd George expressly mentions the disaster to Rumania as the crowning example of the governmental deficiencies which led to his revolt, and now to his resignation. Mr. Asquith replied with dignified brevity to Mr. Lloyd George's indictment. The reader will smile at his suggestion, otherwise well justified under the prevailing political conditions, that his colleague's very able letter should blush unseen, that the correspondence should not be published, in order to avoid a spectacle of national disunion not unpleasing to the enemy. Mr. Asquith wrote :

(Private)

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

December 5th, 1916.

MY DEAR LLOYD GEORGE,—

I need not tell you that I have read your letter of to-day with much regret.

I do not comment upon it for the moment, except to say that I cannot wholly accept your account of what passed between us in regard to my connection with the War Committee.

In particular, you have omitted to quote the first and most material part of my letter of yesterday.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed)—H. H. ASQUITH.

In the meantime, I feel sure that you will see the obvious necessity in the public interest of not publishing at this moment any part of our correspondence.

But authors are sensitive creatures, and Mr. Lloyd George had not polished his periods for the limbo of the official dovecot. So he replied to his chief :

END OF THE ASQUITH GOVERNMENT

WAR OFFICE, S.W.

December 5th, 1916.

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,—

I cannot announce my resignation without assigning the reason. Your request that I should not publish the correspondence that led up to and necessitated it places me therefore in an embarrassing and unfair position. I must give reasons for the grave step I have taken. If you forbid publication of the correspondence, do you object to my stating in another form my version of the causes that led to my resigning?

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)—D. LLOYD GEORGE.

As to the first part of your letter, the publication of the letters would cover the whole ground.

Mr. Asquith concluded the correspondence thus :

10, DOWNING STREET, S.W.

December 5th, 1916.

MY DEAR LLOYD GEORGE,—

It may make a difference to you (in reply to your last letter) if I tell you at once that I have tendered my resignation to the King. In any case, I should deprecate in the public interest the publication in its present form at this moment of your letter to me of this morning.

Of course, I have neither the power nor the wish to prevent your stating in some other form the causes which led you to take the step which you have taken.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed)—H. H. ASQUITH.

It must have been obvious to Mr. Asquith that the resignation of his chief colleague, accompanied by the

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publication of the letters or by Mr. Lloyd George's effective explanations "in another form," all this coming on the top of a large body of national dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war, would be a blow far too heavy for his administration. But there were other more important considerations than the party and personal. It was highly undesirable, as already remarked, that these revelations of national disunion and governmental inefficiency should be published *urbi et orbi*. Such a weakening of the "home base" might react on the national mentality over the whole field of the war. Public duty, as well as the necessities of the situation, imposed on Mr. Asquith one course, and one only, that of resignation. Whether the necessity of the step wholly discounted its merit from the point of view of public duty must be left to casuists. The end which most people of ordinary eyesight could have foreseen from the beginning had been reached. All this intriguing and manœuvring and letter-writing were simply the immediate and circumstantial accompaniments of a change which the nation in its silent and secret counsels had already decreed. There were difficulties to be overcome before the full consummation was reached in Mr. Lloyd George's elevation to the highest seat, but this, too, was implicit in the whole movement.

The first attempt to form a new administration was made by Mr. Bonar Law, for whom the King sent when Mr. Asquith had resigned. Mr. Law had probably not the faintest intention of becoming Prime Minister. He would in any case have failed, as he commanded and could obtain no majority in the House of Commons. On Wednesday, December 6th, the King summoned a conference of various party leaders at Buckingham Palace. There were present Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Arthur Henderson. At this meeting Mr. Lloyd George consented to obey the predetermined

MR. BONAR LAW'S ACHIEVEMENT

and inevitable call, and to attempt to form a Ministry. There were no insuperable difficulties. The Liberal party, it is true, was once more cloven through the middle, and was to remain so for many years. But a goodly number of the younger Liberals followed the fame and fortune of Mr. Lloyd George, and loyally supported him to the end of the war and out beyond.

The Unionists were more of a proposition. Mr. Lloyd George, despite his great war record, had not entirely lived down the memory of his political wild oats, and there was some natural shyness in signing on under his leadership. At the same time it is probable that the great majority of the Unionists approved the Radical statesman's war policy, though they may have questioned some of the methods by which the political revolution had been effected. The true leader of the Unionist party was Mr. Balfour, to whom the whole party looked up with respect and confidence. Mr. Balfour, as we have seen, was marked down for slaughter in the programme of the conspirators. Mr. Asquith had stoutly refused to depose him from the First Lordship of the Admiralty. But now a singular thing happened. Immediately after the conference at the Palace Mr. Bonar Law achieved a stroke of policy which may be described as historically decisive. It made a Lloyd George administration possible, or gave it a stability it could not otherwise have had. Mr. Bonar Law managed to persuade Mr. Balfour to take office under the new régime, not indeed the same office as he had held, but one for which he was better qualified, the Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs.

This appointment secured the support of the whole body of Unionism. Lord Robert Cecil could not disdain to tread in the footsteps of another Cecil, and no Unionist of the rank and file was called upon to be more squeamish than his respected leader. It was a curious turn in affairs. But those who are inclined to think or write satire on

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the subject should remember that Mr. Balfour's refusal of Mr. Bonar Law's request might have thrown our politics into hopeless confusion in the very heart of a desperate struggle for existence. Many crimes may have been committed in the name of carrying on the King's Government, but that necessity was never more obvious and imperative than at this moment. In any case, no doubt, politicians, like soothsayers, understand and tolerate one another, but Mr. Asquith can have felt no moral indignation at a step which was so obviously dictated by public duty and the national interest.

Mr. Lloyd George's first duty was to form the long-desiderated War Council or Cabinet.* Its personnel of five members seems to have been quickly arranged, and might well cause a little surprise. Readers of "Pickwick" will remember the charity boy who, having at last learned his alphabet, wondered whether it was worth while going through so much for so little result. So the sensible British citizen, say in Wigan or Wolverhampton, may have read with surprise that the supreme and innermost authority in this land for the conduct of the greatest war in history was to consist, besides Mr. Lloyd George, of Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Arthur Henderson. Lord Milner, with all his great ability and wisdom and his fine administrative record, was not exactly a popular figure. Nobody called him "Alf" as they called Mr. Chamberlain "Joe." Lord Curzon stood as uplifted and aloof from the nation at large as the figure of Lord Nelson on his column. Mr. Bonar Law had struck no one as a stormy petrel who found his element in a tempest of war and terror. Mr. Henderson seemed to be little more

* This War Cabinet must, of course, be distinguished from the Imperial War Cabinet, representing the Home Country, the Dominions and India, which sat in 1917 and 1918 simultaneously with the Imperial War Conference from which, indeed, it was not sharply distinguished either in function or in personnel. It was one of Mr. Lloyd George's first acts after forming his Government to associate the Dominions and India with our war councils and our war policy. (See Mr. Lloyd George's speech, Dec. 19, 1916.)

THE NEW PRIME MINISTER AND HIS CABINET

than a "token" that the Labour Party had its voice in these esoteric councils.*

Many simple souls in town and country must have wondered why Mr. Balfour was not qualified to be one of the Big Five. But to these criticisms there were obvious replies. One of the requirements in a member of the Cabinet was that he should be free to sit in daily session without departmental distraction. It is true Mr. Bonar Law continued to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, but he was not expected to attend the meetings of the Cabinet so regularly, and even he was relieved by a locum tenens of much usual Treasury work. Still the composition of the new Cabinet did tend to throw Mr. Lloyd George into high relief. It gave his position a dictatorial character. Indeed, General Ludendorff persistently alludes to Mr. Lloyd George and to M. Clemenceau as the Dictators of England and France. Mr. Lloyd George, the great German soldier writes, "had England in his hand."

But England had so willed. The conditions in this country were not greatly dissimilar from those which prompted a Dictatorship from time to time in old Roman history. Committees are excellent in their way, but President Roosevelt's remark will be remembered that the best Committee is one of three members, two of whom are continually absent. Mr. Lloyd George's Cabinet was not quite so dispensable. It enshrined much wisdom and experience. Moreover, when any Department of State was concerned in its deliberations, the appropriate Minister was usually called to its councils.

It was a great thing to have a small body of able and experienced men thus devoting their whole energy to the conduct of the war. And it was a great thing to have a man of Mr. Lloyd George's vigour and vision as their head. We need not dwell on the other appointments, the creation

* Mr. Henderson was afterwards replaced by Mr. Barnes, as Labour representative. Sir Edward Carson and General Smuts subsequently became members of the War Cabinet.

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of new Ministers for Food, Labour, National Service, Shipping, and Reconstruction, presided over mostly by glorified grocers and business men of practical record.

Reference has already been made to a few of the paradoxes and contradictions produced by the war. It was once more surprising that Mr. Lloyd George, the Liberal, the democrat, the Parliamentarian, should have put himself at this time as far as possible out of touch with the House of Commons, and freed himself, as far as possible, from responsibility to it! He was a President, far more than a Prime Minister, during these years. In a speech to the House of Commons delivered on December 16th, soon after these striking events, he alluded to this change in relationship. "The House," he said, "has realized that there has been a separation between the functions of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House. That was because we came to the conclusion that it was more than any one man, whatever his energy or physical strength might be, could do to undertake both functions in the middle of a great war. The task of the Leader of the House is a very anxious and absorbing task, even in war. I have not been able to attend the House very much myself during the last two or three years, but I have been here often enough to realize that the task of the Leader of the House of Commons is not a sinecure even in a war—friends of mine took care that it should not be so."

The Prime Minister, as he must still be called, proceeded to comment on the new arrangements in phraseology which has become famous :

"I have no doubt that the old Cabinets—I am not referring to the last Cabinet, but to the old system of Cabinets, where the heads of every Department were represented inside the Cabinet—were better adapted for navigating the Parliamentary river with its shoals and shifting sands, and perhaps for a cruise

A HOLY OF HOLIES

in home waters. But a Cabinet of twenty-three is rather top-heavy for a gale. I do not say that this particular craft" (i.e. the new Cabinet) "is best adapted for Parliamentary navigation, but I am convinced it is the best for the war, in which you want quick decision above everything.

"Look at the last two and a half years. I am not referring to what has happened in this country. When I say these things I would rather the House of Commons looked at the war as a whole, and took the concerns of the Allies as a whole. We are all perfectly certain, and I shall have the assent of my right hon. friend (Mr. Asquith) in this, that the Allies have suffered disaster after disaster through tardiness of decision and action . . . It is true that in a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom. This was written for Oriental countries in peace times. You cannot run a war with a Sanhedrim. That is the meaning of the Cabinet of Five, with one of its members doing sentry duty outside, manning the walls, and defending the Council Chamber against attack while we are trying to do our work inside."

There was something almost sacerdotal in this detachment of the Five from the laity against whose profane interference this remarkable safeguard had to be devised.

The reader will have been struck with the unusual way in which this governmental change was effected. Normally Governments fall by defeat in the House of Commons or in the constituencies. Nothing of the sort had happened in the present case. The little revolution was achieved over the head of the House of Commons, and of the patient public outside which received as much information about these transactions as was considered good for it.

But the change, by whatever methods it was wrought,

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involved no real grievance for anybody affected by it. Mr. Asquith had been Prime Minister for eight years, and his expectation of life in that office was practically exhausted. Sir Edward Grey was thought to have been very unjustly and unreasonably treated, but he had been Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for eleven years, which, if not a record, was a very unusual period for the tenure of that high position. And there was nothing exceptional in these political changes in our country. Shakings occurred about this time in most Governments. In France Joffre was superseded as Commander-in-Chief by General Nivelle, and a few months later M. Briand himself fell from office. The German Chancellor, Von Bethmann-Hollweg, was engaged in a peace campaign and about to fall from power. In Austria the changes took a more violent form in the murder of Count Sturgkh, and the rapid succession and deposition of Premiers and Foreign Ministers. Russia was on the eve of her great cataclysm. It is not surprising that Great Britain should be touched with the same epidemic of unrest.

Alluding to these events in a speech at a National Liberal Conference in the Central Hall, January, 1922, Mr. Lloyd George spoke in these words :

“ I joined a Coalition Ministry in 1915. I gave up then the position which was regarded as the second in the political hierarchy, and took in the Coalition about the lowest position in that Coalition. I thought I could serve the country better there . . . In 1916 I never sought the headship of the Coalition. I offered to serve under anybody—anybody who would do his best to win the war. I offered to serve under Mr. Bonar Law, and under Mr. Balfour. And it is because they thought it was better that I should take the headship of the Coalition that I was chosen. It was not my choice ; it was not my seeking ; it

NEW LEADERS AND A NEW SYSTEM

was not my proposal ; it was entirely theirs. That is why I am here."

All this is strictly true in the letter. But it is also true that Mr. Lloyd George insisted, and justifiably insisted, on having a more decisive share in determining our war policy. He could scarcely have had that without depressing proportionately the status of the Prime Minister. It has been said that resignation is never more perfect than when the object desired has lost some of its attraction in our eyes. Mr. Lloyd George might well forgo the title of First Minister provided he obtained a large share of the power attached to that office. The nation entered on the last phases of the war with new masters and a new system, and looking backwards we may say that the change on the whole was justified by its results.

CHAPTER IX

TOWARDS THE SINGLE COMMAND

THE new Government under Mr. Lloyd George was called upon at once to deal with the German "peace offensive" at the end of 1916. This began with a speech made by the German Chancellor to the Reichstag on December 12th, in which he made known the contents of a letter on the subject he had received from the Kaiser. The Allies were simply asked to discuss terms with Germany. What the German terms were likely to be is apparent from General Ludendorff's list, which it was proposed a little later to submit to President Wilson. These terms are surprising when we consider they were drawn up less than two years from Germany's total and overwhelming defeat. It is unnecessary to set them forth in detail here.* Briefly, they were founded on the *status quo ante bellum*. France, so far from recovering her lost provinces, was to restore the portions of Upper Alsace she had occupied. Germany was to recover her colonies, and was, moreover, to be endowed with colonial possessions corresponding to her population and her economic interests. Belgium was to be restored, but subject to definite guarantees for Germany's safety. German concerns or private persons were to be indemnified for war injury. The freedom of the seas was to be guaranteed. There was, of course, to be no restitution or reparation of what the Allies had suffered in a war forced upon the world by the spirit of Prussianism.

But Germany's offer at the end of 1916 was little more than a haughty invitation to her enemies to acknowledge

* See "Ludendorff: My War Memories," pp. 320-321.

THE GERMAN "PEACE OFFENSIVE"

their defeat, and negotiate with a generous and humanitarian enemy. All the same, there was danger in this movement for peace. Even in our own country an appreciable body of opinion might be trusted to look favourably on any chance of ending the war. As time went on there were more leaders than Lord Lansdowne who despaired of a fight to a finish and thought England would have to make some reduction in her war aims. One of Mr. Lloyd George's greatest services rendered during the war was the part he took in bracing the national will to resist these dangerous temptations, of which this was the most serious.

In a speech to the House of Commons on December 19th, 1916, Mr. Lloyd George dealt well and faithfully with the German manœuvre. It will be remembered that President Wilson on the day before had addressed an inquiry to both groups of belligerents as to their war aims. Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that the American Note, which simply reproduced the German Chancellor's speech, had been considered by the Allies, who had arrived at identical conclusions. He proceeded to say that—

"any man, or set of men, who wantonly, or without sufficient cause, prolonged a terrible conflict like this would have on their soul a crime which oceans could not cleanse. Upon the other hand it is equally true that any man, or set of men, who out of a sense of weariness or despair abandoned the struggle without achieving the high purpose for which we had entered into it, would be guilty of the costliest act of poltroonery ever perpetrated by any statesman. I should like to quote the very well-known words of Abraham Lincoln under similar conditions: 'We accepted this war for an object, and a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God I hope it will never end until that time.' Are we likely to achieve that object by accepting the

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invitation of the German Chancellor? That is the only question we have to put to ourselves. There has been some talk about proposals of peace. What are the proposals? There are none. To enter into a conference at the invitation of Germany, proclaiming herself victorious, without any knowledge of the proposals she intends to make, is to put our heads into a noose with the rope ends in the hands of Germany."

Mr. Lloyd George went on to re-affirm the only conditions on which peace could be accepted by the Allies. Mr. Asquith had already briefly summarized them as "restitution, reparation, guarantees against repetition." Mr. Lloyd George briefly sketched the record of Prussianism, explained how impossible it had been to live at peace with Germany as a neighbour. "Now that this great war," he said, "has been forced by the Prussian leaders upon France, Russia, Italy, and ourselves it would be folly, it would be cruel folly, not to see to it that this swash-buckling through the streets of Europe to the disturbance of all harmless and peaceful citizens shall be dealt with now as an offence against the law of nations. . . . We will wait," he concluded, "until we hear what terms and guarantees the German Government offer other than those, better than those, surer than those which she so lightly broke; and meanwhile we shall put our trust in an unbroken Army rather than in a broken faith."

Mr. Lloyd George's constancy to this resolution was to be put to much severer tests, but he never blanched or wavered until the war was fought to a victorious finish. Looking back through much disillusionment on the moral and political outcome of the struggle we may nowadays fail to appreciate fully this splendid courage. Yet there can be no doubt that a patched-up peace after an ambiguous finish would have been worse in its consequences than even an overwhelming German triumph. Civilization might

LORD LANSDOWNE'S PRONOUNCEMENT

have perished in the resulting chaos and the ulterior conflict which would inevitably have followed.

All through 1917 and the supreme ordeal of 1918 the Prime Minister maintained this high resolve, and strove to raise the national will to the same level. There are occasions on which speech and not silence is golden, when the word is also an act. Such were those on which Mr. Lloyd George counselled the nation to stand firm for a clear and conclusive finish to the war. At the Queen's Hall on August 4th, 1917, he said :

" There are some who are more concerned about ending the war than about winning it, and plans which lead to victory, if they prolong the conflict, have their disapproval, and the people who are responsible for such plans have their condemnation. Let us keep our eye steadily on the winning of the war. May I say let us keep both eyes ? Some have a cast in their eye, and while one eye is fixed truly on victory, the other is wandering around to other issues or staring stonily at some pet or partisan project of their own. Beware of becoming cross-eyed ! Keep both eyes on victory. Look neither to the right nor to the left. That is the way we shall win."

Thus Demosthenes had to divert his fellow-countrymen from the peace and friendship advances of Philip of Macedon, but happily the modern orator had a stauncher and more responsive public. Yet the temptation kept recurring, and the "*jusqu'aboutist*," to use the barbarous expression of the day, had to be vigilant. The danger became almost acute when Lord Lansdowne, justly reputed one of the wisest and coolest-headed statesmen in the land, published his famous letter in the *Daily Telegraph* of November 29th, 1917. Happily the spirit of the nation at large was unaffected by this authoritative suggestion that a decisive

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victory on either side was impossible, and that England must abate some of the requirements she had laid down as her only conditions of peace. The liveliest imagination can scarcely visualize what would have resulted for us and the world if the advice of this old and well-tried counsellor had been adopted. Yet, as already said, he was not alone among our elder statesmen who at this time or a little later despaired of a decisive British victory.

But Mr. Lloyd George saw more deeply and more clearly. His almost uncanny clairvoyance was illustrated in the speech he made on December 14th, 1917, in Gray's Inn, which, incidentally, had been his first home when he settled in London in 1890. He seized that opportunity to reply to Lord Lansdowne's tempting and disintegrating letter. "The danger," he said with penetrating truth, "is not the extreme pacifist. I am not afraid of him. But I warn the nation to watch the man who thinks that there is a halfway house between victory and defeat. There is no halfway house between victory and defeat." Those who were thinking of a "pact of peace" or League of Nations as a means of ending the war and guaranteeing the peace of the world were warned that these policies were all right after victory. Had not an equally solemn undertaking just been regarded and treated as a scrap of paper? "We must take care not to be misled by mere words—'leagues of nations,' 'disarmament,' 'arbitration,' 'security.' They are all great and blessed phrases, but without the vitalizing forces of victory they are nothing but words."

There is a popular book entitled "The Decisive Battles of the World." A companion volume might well be put together from the decisive speeches of the world, speeches that were big with fate and made history. Therein these words of Mr. Lloyd George addressed to the lawyers of Gray's Inn on a December day, dark with winter and with war, would find a place. The speech is memorable also for

WHAT CONSTITUTES A RIGHTEOUS PEACE

its references to the Russian exit from and the American entry into the war. But its main purpose was the heartening of the nation, which was to read it, to further efforts and sacrifices. The following passage is of an eloquence that is more than formal and decorative :

“ Let there be no doubt as to the alternatives with which we are confronted. One of them is to make easy terms with the triumphant outlaw, as men are driven to do in order to buy immunity in lands where there is no authority to enforce law. That is one course. It means abasing ourselves in terror before lawlessness. It means, ultimately, a world intimidated by successful bandits. The other is to go through with our divine task of vindicating justice, so as to establish a righteous and everlasting peace for ourselves and for our children. Surely no nation with any regard for its interests, for its self-respect, for its honour, can hesitate a moment in its choice. Victory is an essential condition for the security of a free world. All the same, intensely as I realize that, if I thought things would get no better the longer you fought, not merely would there be no object in prolonging the war, but to do so would be infamous. Wantonly to sacrifice brave lives, nay, to force brave men to endure for one profitless hour the terrible conditions of this war, merely because statesmen had not the courage to face the obloquy which would be involved in agreeing to an unsatisfactory peace, would be a black crime when we remember what we owe to these gallant men. It is because I am firmly convinced that, despite some untoward events, despite discouraging appearances, we are making steady progress towards the goal we set in front of us in 1914, that I would regard peace overtures to Prussia, at the very moment when the Prussian military spirit is drunk with boastfulness,

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as a betrayal of the great trust with which my colleagues and I have been charged."

But we must retrace our steps to the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917, when the Allies considered and rejected the peace suggestion of the German Government. That decision, in which Mr. Lloyd George played a determining part, had momentous consequences. It led at once to Germany's desperate policy of unlimited submarine operations, and this in turn at the beginning of April to the entry of America into the war with all its direct and indirect effects. Germany accorded to Mr. Lloyd George nothing less than his full credit for the "brutal refusal" of the German peace offer. The leader of the Majority Socialists, Herr Scheidemann, speaking in the Reichstag on February 27th, said, "Lloyd George is the true godfather of our Government's resolution to adopt the unrestricted submarine campaign." It is a terrible imputation, but Mr. Lloyd George may have confidence that history will distribute with unerring justice the moral responsibility for these decisions and their results.

The year 1917 opened with favourable omens. The returns of the long struggle on the Somme came in in the form of a German retirement upon the Hindenburg—or, as the Germans called it, the Siegfried—line. This withdrawal delivered hundreds of square miles of French territory from the grip of the invader. But in itself it had little effect on the comparative advantage of the two groups of belligerents or on the result and duration of the war. During the year our failures and prestige in Mesopotamia were fully restored by the capture of Baghdad, and before the end of the year Jerusalem was also ours. These blows led to the collapse of the Turkish forces and indirectly to that of the Central Powers. East Africa was almost wholly subjugated, and the German advance was checked for the time being in Rumania.

INDECISIVE MILITARY OPERATIONS

But great disasters and great perils still awaited the Allies, and the situation at the end of the year scarcely justified the expectations that had been formed on the change of government in this country. The western front was loud and lurid with battle throughout almost the whole year. Yet results were least decisive just where decision was most directly and consciously sought. The noise, the expenditure of life and the display of magnificent heroism were utterly incommensurate with the results. At immense cost to us and the enemy we won unimportant victories and sustained unimportant defeats. Great hopes had been excited in this country and in France by the over-advertised offensive in Champagne planned and organized by General Nivelle. In May the disappointment was complete. The Germans still occupied the Chemin des Dames, and the heights of Moronvillers and Laon, the ambitious objectives, were scarcely threatened. Yet the cost in French blood was outrageous, and General Nivelle, the dashing artilleryman who had taken all imaginations with his promises of victory, was deposed from the chief command in favour of the more stolid and plodding Pétain.

Our operations around Arras and afterwards nearer the sea in Flanders were scarcely more satisfactory. They were marked by outstanding feats of heroism such as the Canadian capture of the Vimy Ridge. Vast numbers of Germans were killed, and our line appreciably advanced. But the cost to ourselves was enormous and, as we shall see, stung Mr. Lloyd George into comments whose indiscretion was only condoned on account of their truth. In man and material this country had reached the high-water mark, and yet this laboriously achieved and dearly bought preparation was practically wasted on operations which left us at the end practically where we were at the beginning. The Flanders campaign in particular cost us some quarter of a million casualties. It was the most costly and tactically the most fruitless of British offensives.

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Such success as we won was more expensive to us than to the enemy. We gained about five miles in three months' hard fighting and a position which was about fifty feet higher than our original line at Ypres. Such gains were merely nominal. In view of their contemplated final attack on the West in 1918, the Germans could have asked for nothing better than this wholesale sacrifice of first-class British troops.

But the big and influential events of the year must be looked for elsewhere. These were the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in March, the entry of America into the war in April, and the staggering blow inflicted upon the Italian armies in the autumn and winter of the year. This tremendous stroke was made possible only by the relief on the East due to the Russian collapse, which also led to the crowning German effort on the West in 1918.

The Italian armies had performed wonderful feats in their advance in the Eastern Alps, through country which seemed impracticable for military operations, and south-eastwards to the Adriatic and the suburbs of Trieste. It was a wonderful achievement, but it had left the Italian armies with a weakened left flank while the centre and right were extended much too far towards the coveted objective of Trieste. For many competent observers in those days such triumphs as the Italian capture of Gorizia could not disguise the real danger to which the armies of our ally were exposed.

In January of 1917 there occurred at Rome one of those inter-Allied conferences in which Mr. Lloyd George had so much faith and which failed so frequently of their most important objects. The entire military and political situation was brought under review, and Mr. Lloyd George, who always fulfilled Matthew Arnold's precept of letting his imagination play round the problems of life, was ready with strategic counsel to our Italian friends. His suggestion, which had a certain kinship to his old projects in aid

INTER-ALLIED CONFERENCE AT ROME

of Servia and Rumania, was that the Italian and Allied forces should advance through the Eastern Alps into the plains of Austria and towards Vienna. This project was not without historic precedents, but it was laughed at in certain quarters in this country as the impracticable dream of a cosy arm-chair strategist. At that time it was well worth consideration, but we must remember that the Russian revolution had not yet arrived, with the great freedom and mobility it gave to the Austro-Hungarian armies reinforced by troops of the Fatherland. That big event could not be foreseen in Rome in January. A Germanic offensive such as shattered the armies of Italy this year might have been no less fatal to an Allied force advancing intrepidly towards, or established precariously in, Vienna.

The Conference ended without effecting those united counsels covering every theatre of the war which Mr. Lloyd George was coming to regard as the only way of salvation for the Allies. If such a single and supreme authority had been established, achieving all the objects of that blessed word "co-ordination," the approaching Italian disaster might well have been averted. But things resumed their old course. Italy went on with her own precarious and perilous war regardless of what her Allies were doing, and the Allies kept running their heads against stone walls in the West at the very time when Germany was breaking the Allied line in the South-East, threatening to divide Northern from Southern Italy, to knock Italy herself out of the war, perhaps to endanger the Allied command of the Mediterranean and to bring the Germanic forces into France by a side door. There was no conception that the Italian front was as vital a part of the Allied battle-system as any other. The feeling was, as Mr. Lloyd George expressed it in the House of Commons, that the Italian front was "not our business."

When the great disaster occurred, the Washington correspondent of the *Times* wrote :

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“ American military experts believe that if the Allied help rushed to General Cadorna’s assistance to stem the tide of invasion had been thrown into the balance when Italy’s forces were within forty miles of Laibach, the Allies would have been able to force the road to Vienna. Victory at Laibach would have spelled a new Austerlitz, and the magnitude of the prize almost within his grasp is believed here to have justified General Cadorna in taking the risk of advancing his centre too far and temporarily weakening his left flank. The lack of co-operation between France, Great Britain and Italy is blamed here for the disaster which ensued, and which it is believed would not have occurred if one supreme military authority had directed the combined operations of the Allies with the sole aim of victory without regard to any other considerations.”

In his famous speech at Paris on November 13th, 1917, Mr. Lloyd George reverted to these early days of that year and the Italian situation then. “ I should like,” he said, “ to be able to read you the statement submitted to the conference at Rome in January about the perils and possibilities of the Italian front this year, so that you might judge it in the light of subsequent events. I feel confident that nothing could more convincingly demonstrate the opportunities which the Allies have lost through lack of combined thought and action.” In fact the military operations of 1917 were one prolonged object-lesson in the evils of divided counsels and responsibility, and of the sectional or compartmental system of conducting the war.

After the conference the Italians continued their detached and indecisive operations near Trieste. There was at this time much discontent and war-scepticism in Italy. German and Bolshevik propaganda were rife in Turin and other centres. Some military success was desirable as

THE ITALIAN DISASTER ON THE ISONZO

a public diversion from these influences, and General Cadorna did his best to provide it. But the intaking of Trieste, with the ulterior projects contemplated, remained unachieved, and in July Cadorna appealed for help to Britain and France. France was then pursuing Pétain's rather Fabian tactics, and was not disposed to assume any risks in another theatre of war. England, however, sent some batteries of artillery, but Cadorna continued practically to plough a lonely as well as a difficult furrow. In September he announced that his campaign was finished, and the sixteen British batteries were accordingly brought back.

Meanwhile, Ludendorff, profiting from the Russian collapse, was planning behind the scenes a titanic stroke against the Italian forces concentrated near Trieste. His objects were very intelligible. He wished to compel France and Britain to send help to Italy. He would thus weaken their western lines with a view to the final and climacteric assault he projected for the spring of 1918. But he had also, as he tells us, another purpose. The Austro-Hungarian armies were sadly depressed in morale. There was even talk about Austria dropping out of active operations. The German campaign against Italy and the resulting success proved a great relief and stimulus.

The officer chosen to deliver this stroke was General Otto von Below, whose very name is almost a menace in itself. Six German and seven Austrian divisions were placed under his command, and the attack was made on October 24th in cold and rainy weather at Tolmino, near Caporetto, on the Isonzo, against a section of the second Italian army, which consisted largely of mutinous regiments who had been especially demoralized by foreign propaganda. These broke with little resistance, and the disastrous retreat of the Italian armies was soon in full swing. Many Italian troops fought with desperate valour, preferring annihilation to retreat, but no effective stand was possible, on the line of either the Tagliamento or the

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Livenza. Only along the Piave was the chase at last stayed. By this time supporting troops had arrived from France and England, and the Germans had thus effected one of their purposes.

Early in December General Ludendorff decided that no advantage was to be gained by carrying the war beyond the River Piave, so that General von Below and his six divisions were sent back to the western front after their eventful change of air and scenery. The Germans had indeed won a resounding victory. They had penetrated far into Italian territory, and had captured a quarter of a million prisoners, 1,800 guns and large quantities of munitions and supplies of many kinds.

In the midst of this Italian disaster Mr. Lloyd George started for Italy. It needed little imagination to foresee that 1917, like 1915 and 1916, might end, unless something drastic was done, in the sacrifice of an Allied state. His conviction was by this time complete that these recurring disasters were the result of divided and separate responsibilities in the conduct of the war, and he determined that at last something should be done to establish a system of unity and co-operation among the Allies. Before he left for Italy he drew up proposals for a permanent inter-Allied organization which should ensure this object. He obtained the Cabinet's assent to his resolutions, and with the paper in his pocket went to a conference of Allied statesmen and generals at Rapallo, that lovely spot on the Italian Riviera which in recent years has been the scene of so much treaty-making and international palavering.

Amid those charming surroundings Mr. Lloyd George joined an assembly of Allied Premiers and military leaders. The Italian disaster had had its perfect work, and there was no opposition to the British statesman's proposals for a central inter-allied Council for conducting the war as a whole. They were passed almost in the form in which they had been approved by the British Cabinet. The

THE CONFERENCE AT RAPALLO

wear and tear of Mr. Lloyd George's public life must have been greatly relieved by these recurring visits to the most famous and beautiful regions of the Continent, where he was received with the consideration due to the most powerful statesman in the world's greatest Empire. From Rapallo he proceeded to Turin and Milan. He noted the fields of Arcola, Lodi and Marengo, great names in France's secular struggle for the cause of human freedom. And on the battlefield of Solferino he met that genial and popular figure, the King of Italy. By this time French and British troops were hastening eastwards to the scene of war, too late, as usual, to avert a great disaster but in time to bring the enemy's pursuit to a permanent standstill. "We saw French soldiers pass on to defend the freedom which their fathers helped to win with their blood," said Mr. Lloyd George at Paris. "When I saw them in such environment I thought that France has a greater gift for sacrificing herself for human liberty than any nation in the world. As I reflected on the sacrifices she has made in this war for the freedom of mankind I had a sob in my heart"—so sensitive was Mr. Lloyd George to the history, pathos or romance of the scenes he witnessed in the course of the world war, and so broad were the sympathies of the man who perhaps mainly on that account was coming to be regarded as the War Minister *par excellence*, not only officially in his own country, but in a broader sense in all the lands of the great Alliance.

But Mr. Lloyd George had not finished at Rapallo his efforts for a unified control. He had only begun his task. He knew how easy it is to carry abstract resolutions and then to think no more about the practical subject, as though the whole duty of man had been accomplished. He was determined that this should not be the case with the proposals which had been endorsed in London and Rapallo. There was only one way to get the Allied Council established, and that was to create a sensation,

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to shock the world into attention, if necessary, by some bold and unconventional indiscretion. This he managed to achieve at Paris on November 12th, 1917, on his way home from Italy. The speech he there made effected the immediate and desired controversy which did not quickly subside.

He began by announcing that the governments of France, Italy and Great Britain had decided "to set up a Supreme Council of the Allies whose forces operate in the West to ensure the united direction of their efforts on that front." The fault, he said, of the disasters which the Allied cause had sustained in the war lay not with the armed forces but simply and solely with this lack of common and combined action among the Allied Powers. Everybody had talked about the need for unity, but they had never passed, he added alliteratively, "from rhetoric to reality, from speech into strategy." They had gone on talking of Eastern and Western, Italian, Salonican, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian fronts, when all the time there was only one front with many flanks. He alluded to the Allied conferences which had been held from time to time in Paris and which he himself, we may add, had always promoted and encouraged. But these had effected little more than an occasional appearance of unity of control. What was wanted, as he afterwards again explained in the House of Commons, was a permanent body, sitting day by day with a view to co-ordinating the strategy on all fronts. The machinery of liaison officers, of occasional meetings, once or twice a year, of ministers and chiefs of staff, had been quite inadequate to secure the needful collaboration.

The speaker illustrated this Allied defect by a brief survey of war events. They had blockaded Germany all round the West, but forgotten to close the southern door or to strengthen Servia for its defence. So Germany opened the channel to the vast storehouses of supply in the East

THE SPEECH AT PARIS

and converted Turkey into a formidable and well-equipped enemy. "Half the men," said Mr. Lloyd George reverting to his old 'Eastern' mood, "who fell in the futile attempt to break through on the western front in September of that year (1915), would have saved Serbia, would have saved the Balkans and completed the blockade of Germany."

And so with Rumania. Once more Germany relieved and largely frustrated the blockade by breaking into the rich corn and oil fields of that little kingdom. And now Italy had suffered from the same cause. No precautions had been taken by the Allies to meet the results of the Russian revolution. They went on with their own plans which were independent of each other, instead of each constituting a part of a strategic whole. Then came the passage which excited violent protest and was nicely designed to do so :

"You will forgive me for talking quite plainly because this is no time for concealing or for glossing over facts. War is pre-eminently a game where realities count. This is 1917. What has happened? I wish there had even been some variety in the character of the tragedy. But there has been the same disaster due to the same cause. Russia collapsed. Italy was menaced. The business of Russia is to look after her own front. It is the concern of Italy to look after her own war. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Disastrous! Fatal! The Italian front is just as important to France and Britain as it was to Germany. Germany understood that in time. Unfortunately we did not."

This was plain speaking in the metropolis of a foreign power. But there was worse to come, something quite certain to inflame the visage of many an irascible major and to offend countless susceptibilities, national and pro-

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fessional, the more so because Mr. Lloyd George's remarks obviously contained that element of truth which, as the French proverb says, is the only thing that wounds. The speaker proceeded intrepidly, foreknowing well the storm he was raising :

“ It is no use minimizing the extent of the disaster. If you do, then you will never take adequate steps to repair it. When we advance a kilometre into the enemy's lines, snatch a small shattered village out of his cruel grip, capture a few hundred of his soldiers, we shout with unfeigned joy. And rightly so, for it is the symbol of our superiority over a boastful foe and a sure guarantee that in the end we can and shall win.

But what if we had advanced fifty kilometres beyond his lines and made 200,000 of his soldiers prisoners, and taken 2,500 of his best guns, with enormous quantities of ammunition and stores ? What print would we have for our headlines ? Have you an idea how long it would take the arsenals of France and Great Britain to manufacture 2,500 guns ? ”

The lesson, thought this candid friend, had now been learned. That was the meaning of the superior Council they had now established. But what a pity it had not been learned three months before ! What a difference that would have made ! As further evidence of his earnestness in this task he told his hearers he had made up his mind that, unless some change were effected, he could no longer remain responsible for a war direction doomed to disaster for lack of unity.

But the object was only half achieved by the Paris speech. He had to meet hostile criticism at home and to familiarize the public mind there with the idea of unified control. Mr. Lloyd George was “ up against ” powerful in-

A BOLD DEFENCE

fluences. Military professional opinion was hostile, though, as he pointed out in the House of Commons, Lord Kitchener had made the same proposal in 1915 and, stranger still, at a meeting of military chiefs in July, 1917, where Generals Pershing, Cadorna and Foch and Sir William Robertson were present, the idea of an inter-Allied Council for the conduct of the war had been suggested and approved. Yet military amour-propre was offended by the setting-up of the Versailles Council. So also was the national sentiment of a large number of people, while Mr. Lloyd George's party and political enemies were not likely to forgo any chance of discrediting and deposing him.

But if his opponents expected that the Prime Minister would meet the House of Commons in an apologetic or penitential frame of mind they were disappointed. Mr. Asquith gave him the desired opportunity for a speech by opening the whole question in the House on November 9th (1917). The speech itself bore down all opposition. It was one of Mr. Lloyd George's most successful utterances, full of courage and humour and joy in battle. It greatly strengthened the speaker's hold on the heart and mind of his country, and prepared the way effectually for the great development of the single command when the need for that arrived during the following year. One passage may be quoted for the light it throws on the Prime Minister's method and spirit in those historic days. Alluding to the much controverted Paris speech he said :

" Let me say at once about that speech that I considered it carefully. . . . If that speech was wrong I cannot plead any impulse. I cannot plead that it was something I said in the heat of the moment. I had considered it and I did so for a deliberate purpose. I have seen resolutions for unity and for co-ordination. Where are they? You might as well have thrown them away into the waste-paper basket. . . . I

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made up my mind to take risks and I took them in order to arouse public sentiment, not here merely, but in France, in Italy and in America, to get public sentiment behind to see that this document became an act. It is not easy to rouse public opinion. I may know nothing about military strategy, but I do know something of political strategy (loud laughter). To get public interest in a proposal and to convince the public of the desirability of it is an essential part of political strategy. That is why I did it. And it has done it. . . . So I set out to deliver a disagreeable speech that would force everybody to talk, and they have talked about it throughout two or three continents. The result is that America is in, Italy is in, France is in, Britain is in, and public opinion is in, and that is all I wanted (much cheering). . . . I want this thing to be a reality ; otherwise it is no good. All this talk about Easterners and Westerners is balderdash. The field is north, south, east and west, and our business is to bring pressure upon the enemy from every point of the compass and inflict hurt upon him where you can. . . . I want an inter-Allied Council that will so order the whole field of battle that the whole resources of the Allies shall be thrown into the conflict in order to bring pressure to bear upon the enemy."

It is an interesting point, which seems to have escaped the notice of most commentators on Mr. Lloyd George's career, that in this speech he decisively ruled out the notion of a generalissimo for the Allied forces, which was in a few months to be translated into fact. The Versailles Council, as conceived and established by Mr. Lloyd George, was in the nature of a compromise. The French desired the single command by a single officer, and the Americans would have given the Council full executive powers. But

THE VERSAILLES COUNCIL

Mr. Lloyd George, who was always able to temper the ideal with the real, knew he could proceed only by stages. The storm that broke out over his own advisory type of Council might have wrecked the whole movement if he had insisted on either of the other suggestions. Thus we find the man who more than any other made it possible for Foch to become in March, 1918, Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces strongly dissuading such a step in November, 1917. The system, he said, would not work. It would produce friction not only between the armies, but between nations and governments. Yet the single command, as Mr. Lloyd George knew, was implicit in the creation of the Versailles Council, and he was swift to establish the single command when the compelling crisis came.

The Prime Minister had to meet divers imputations, strongly and even passionately urged against him. The strangest of all was that the Versailles Council meant that the civilians were interfering with the soldiers. "Hands off the Army" was the phrase that represented this curious and unenlightened frame of mind. In simple truth the Government had erred almost in the opposite direction. "There has not been a single battalion or a single gun moved this year except with the advice of the General Staff. There has not been a single attack ordered in any part of the battlefield by British troops except on the advice of the General Staff."

In purely military matters, and perhaps even beyond that limit, the Government had let the soldiers decide. But Mr. Lloyd George was right in maintaining the claim of the civilian power to take its share in the conduct of the war and in the last resort to control the military. It may be desirable to leave tactics to the professional soldiers, though even here many people have a certain suspicion of the rigid professional habit of mind. Common-sense and imagination cannot be taught by text-books, and some of the greatest commanders in history have been wholly

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without professional training. It may even be said that in no department of life does the professional mind require the control and correction of the free, lay, civilian mind more than in that of military affairs.

But into strategy in the wider sense of the word politics and statesmanship enter at least as conspicuously as military science. This is true of all wars, but it was exceptionally true of a war enveloping almost the whole planet and involving the inter-relationships of nearly all civilized and even uncivilized states. In such a war the statesman had to be master and the soldier the servant, and Mr. Lloyd George did a great service in insisting on this principle not only in speech but in the disciplinary proceedings he had to take against distinguished soldiers who challenged it. His appointment of experienced business men to semi-military functions and to high rank in the army is further evidence of his liberal views on this subject. He explained in this House of Commons speech that there are things in war which belong purely to the military sphere and others which belong purely to the political, and that the politician who meddles with the former is just as mischievous as the soldier who meddles with the latter. "But," he added, "there is a vast sphere in war which is partly political and partly military. Supplies, transport, shipping, distribution of man-power, diplomacy, the moral of the people—all these things are political even more than they are military, and to divide people into politicians and soldiers in war is unscientific . . . what you want is a co-operation of both."

In the same speech Mr. Lloyd George rebuked certain tendencies in this country to foster suspicion of France. There was too much talk about putting ourselves and our armies under French control. Consciously and unconsciously the Prime Minister was preparing public opinion for the establishment of that single command under which the Allies finally emerged into victory.

THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

Meanwhile Russia had been woefully disappointing her friends in the West. Mr. Lloyd George was not wiser than other generous spirits who believed that the new Russian government would take over the war against the Central Powers bequeathed by its predecessor and that Russia would prove a far more valuable ally now that she had freed herself from an oppressive and corrupt régime. In March, 1917, the revolution opened in Russia. In April the United States came into the war. The fall of the Russian aristocracy made that step easier for that great republican state. History was in the making in those days. Mr. Lloyd George was impressed with their eventfulness. "There are times," he said, "when the world spins so leisurely along its destined course that it seems for centuries to be at a standstill. There are also times when it rushes along at a giddy pace, covering the track of centuries in a year. These are the times we are living in now. Six weeks ago Russia was an autocracy. She is now one of the most advanced democracies in the world. To-day we are waging the most devastating war that the world has ever seen. To-morrow—not perhaps a distant to-morrow—war may be abolished for ever from the categories of human crimes."*

All through 1917 Mr. Lloyd George hoped the best of the new Russia. Speaking at Glasgow, June 29th, he spoke with enthusiastic confidence on the subject. He had looked forward with much anxiety to the eventual peace conference when the democracies of the world would have to settle its future in council with the representatives of the most reactionary autocracy existing. Now that difficulty was gone. "Russia is unshackled, Russia is free, and the representatives of Russia at the Peace Congress will be representatives of a free people fighting for freedom, arranging the future of democracy on the lines of freedom. That is what I mean when I say that not merely will the

* Speech at the American Luncheon Club, April 12, 1917.

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Russian Revolution ensure more complete victory, but will ensure victory more exalted than any one could have contemplated before."

Mr. Lloyd George even ventured to quote with approval his references to Russia made in the speech at Bangor on August, 5th, 1915. He has been twitted with this advertisement of a prophecy never destined to be fulfilled. But what he predicted, the effect of war and defeat on the destinies of Russia, did indeed come to pass, and Mr. Lloyd George is to be credited with a remarkable feat of long-sighted prevision. The prophecy was not inappropriately made in the Welsh language, even the translation revealing a touch of the bardic "awen." Thus spake the prophet :

"The Eastern sky is dark and lowering ; the stars have been clouded over. I regard the stormy horizon with anxiety, but with no dread. To-day I can see the colour of a new hope beginning to empurple the sky.

"The enemy in their victories know not what they are doing. Let them beware, for they are unshackling Russia. With their monster artillery they are shattering the rusty bars that fettered the strength of the people of Russia. You can see them shaking their powerful limbs free from the stifling debris and preparing for the conflict with a new spirit. The Germans are hammering a sword that will destroy them, and freeing a great nation to wield it with a more potent stroke and a mightier sweep than it ever yet commanded."

This speech, Mr. Lloyd George informed his hearers, got him into trouble with the Russian court. The forecast was, indeed, fulfilled more wonderfully than the speaker could have imagined. If British statesmen and people welcomed the Russian Revolution, it was even more

THE NEMESIS OF A CRIME

pleasing to the leaders of the German Armies. General Ludendorff has told the world what a relief the news of it brought to him. "How often," he writes,* "had I not hoped for a revolution in Russia in order that our military burden might be alleviated! But my desire had been merely a castle in the air. Now it had come true, and as a surprise. I felt as though a weight had been removed from my chest." But he goes on ominously to say: "At that time I never contemplated the possibility that it might undermine our own position later on."

War repeals for the time most rules of morality. Lying, treachery, cruelty, all the instincts of the ape and the tiger are supposed to be justified by its necessities. But even the crimes of war have their Nemesis, and the Germans paid the full penalty of their unconscionable sin, wicked as the poisoning of wells and the scattering of disease germs, when they passed Lenin into Russia to work his designs on that country. The poison flowed back inexorably into German veins. "Looking back," writes Ludendorff, "I can see that our decline obviously began with the outbreak of the Revolution in Russia." Few things in history are more striking and thought-compelling than his account of these secret, returning influences which in the end far transcended all the advantages that Germany and the German command had anticipated from the troubles of Russia. The Bolshevik propaganda penetrated everywhere. It travelled with the German troops in their railway trains. It whispered in their ears in the war trenches. German soldiers returning from captivity in Russia spread the infection far and wide. The fear of Bolshevism palsied the hand and sapped the spirit of the German government. Mr. Lloyd George's prophecy was fulfilled in a manner hidden even from his own far-seeing eyes.

But by the end of 1917 Russia was fairly out of the war, at least in a military sense, though in another, as we have

* "My War Memories": Vol. II, p. 413, 446. See also pp. 643-645.

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seen, she was still powerfully in it. "If the Russian democracy have decided to abandon the struggle against military autocracy, the American democracy are taking it up." So Mr. Lloyd George defined, on December 14th, 1917, at Gray's Inn, the most momentous fact of the year. The war had, indeed, become "a race between General Hindenburg and President Wilson." The Allies had to deal with the military complications of the Russian collapse followed by the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bukharest. The elimination of Russia freed 80 German divisions, a good third of the total German force, from duty on the Eastern front. It had already enabled Germany to inflict a far-resounding blow on Italy, and it now prompted Ludendorff to attempt a "knock-out" offensive, that would need no repeating, against the Western front, in the springtime of 1918.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST STRUGGLE

THE year 1918, which was to see the overwhelming defeat of the Central Powers and the end of the war, dawned not too auspiciously for the Allies. It is true our forces had advanced from Baghdad and that the Holy City had been surrendered to our arms. But, on the other hand, the last British offensive in 1917 against Cambrai, though it succeeded at first, had ended in the loss of most of its gains and in renewed conditions of stalemate. The submarine attack on British shipping had been immensely destructive. During the first year of unrestricted warfare the Germans, according to an estimate by Sir Eric Geddes, destroyed six million tons of British shipping. The Germans built submarines faster than they lost them, and the British lost ships faster than they could build them. Mr. Lloyd George did his utmost to counteract the depressing influences of this waste of our most vital resources. On one day, November 17th, he informed the nation, we had accounted for five German submarines, but as a matter of fact in the whole month of December we scarcely exceeded that figure. Yet on November 19th, in the House of Commons, Mr. Lloyd George boldly declared the submarine fear exorcised. The only thing that could destroy us, he said, was lack of unity. Much national indignation had also been caused by the apparently easy way in which German warships attacked British fishing vessels and other craft. On January 14th, 1918, Yarmouth was bombarded by enemy destroyers. The German air attacks upon our cities had also become more and more alarming. On October 19th, 1917, Zeppelins hovered over London, killing and injuring many people. But this was the last

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Zeppelin attack on the metropolis, though these vulnerable leviathans of the air continued to visit our north-east coasts as late as March, 1918. And the aeroplane raids were not less destructive.

As yet the Americans were not effectually in the war, so that the Russian débâcle had transferred the superiority in numbers from the Allies to the Central Powers. The military co-operation of the Italians had also been greatly discounted by the disaster of 1917, though with the help of British and French divisions the Piave line was firmly held. So doubtful, indeed, did the prospects seem in this last winter of the war that Lord Lansdowne published the despondent and dangerous letter to which reference has been made. The minimum demands of the Allies from the peace were, however, soon restated. On January 5th, 1918, in the Central Hall, London, Mr. Lloyd George, speaking to a body of trade union delegates, defined explicitly those Allied objects. He explained that his statement was made after consultation with labour leaders, with Mr. Asquith, Lord Grey, and representatives of the Oversea Dominions. The programme, conveniently summarized, was as follows.*

WHAT WE ARE NOT FIGHTING FOR—

We are not fighting a war of aggression against the German people.

The destruction or disruption of Germany or the German people has never been a war aim with us from the first day of this war to this day. Nor are we fighting to destroy Austria-Hungary or to deprive Turkey of its capital, or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace, which are predominantly Turkish in race.

WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR—

I.—EUROPE.

Complete restoration, political, territorial and economic,

* See the *Times*, January 7, 1918.

THE MINIMUM DEMANDS OF THE ALLIES

of the independence of Belgium, and such reparation as can be made for the devastation of its towns and provinces.

Restoration of Serbia, Montenegro and the occupied parts of France, Italy and Rumania.

Complete withdrawal of the alien armies and reparation for injustice done—a fundamental condition of permanent peace.

With the French democracy to the death in their demand for a reconsideration of the great wrong of 1871, when, without regard to the wishes of the population, two French provinces were torn from the side of France and incorporated in the German Empire.

An independent Poland, comprising all those genuinely Polish elements who desire to form part of it, an urgent necessity for the stability of Western Europe.

Genuine self-government on true democratic principles to those Austro-Hungarian nationalities who have long deserved it.

Satisfaction of the legitimate claims of the Italians for union with those of their own race and tongue.

Justice to men of Rumanian blood and speech in their legitimate aspirations.

II.—ASIA AND AFRICA.

Constantinople to remain Turkish capital.

Passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas to be internationalized and neutralized.

Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine entitled to recognition of their separate national conditions.

German colonies held at the disposal of a Conference whose decision must have primary regard to the wishes and interests of the native inhabitants of such Colonies.

III.—GENERAL.

Reparations for injuries done in violation of international law, especially as regards our seamen.

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The establishment by some international organization of an alternative to war as a means of settling international disputes.

IV.—RESUMÉ.

Sanctity of treaties to be re-established.

A territorial settlement to be secured based on the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed.

The creation of some international organization to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war.

President Wilson's correction to the Lansdowne letter was prompt and effectual. German autocracy was "a thing without conscience or honour or capacity for covenanted peace" and peace would come only "when the German people have spokesmen whose word we can believe and when those spokesmen are ready in the name of their people to accept the common judgment of the nations as to what shall henceforth be the basis of law and of covenant for the life of the world." These words occurred in President Wilson's message of December 4th, 1917. The American President had already become almost the moral and spiritual confessor of the world outside the Central Powers. On January 8th, 1918, he promulgated his fourteen points, whereas "the good God," remarked Clemenceau, "was contented with only Ten." It was to this Duodecalogue that the Germans appealed when events compelled them to sue for an Armistice. The fourteen points were modified by the Allied statesmen at Versailles, but they remained the text round which the peace discussions turned. It is interesting to notice that in the original draft, no mention whatever was made of indemnities.*

* See Appendix for the points as originally formulated.

M. CLEMENCEAU FRENCH PRIME MINISTER

We must return now for a moment to the Versailles Council and the controversies it excited. In France M. Ribot's government, which had succeeded M. Briand's in March, 1917, fell in November before the reactions of the Italian disaster, and M. Ribot was succeeded by the impenetrable and imperturbable Clemenceau, whose name will always be as closely associated with the War and the Peace in French history books as Mr. Lloyd George's in British. Mr. Lloyd George and M. Clemenceau were, indeed, when acting in unison, something like "a perfect strength." The British Prime Minister was not a man to be "overcrowded" or dominated by any human personality, but if there was any person for whom he had a respect, touched with a slight suspicion of fear, it was the "Tiger," who, at the age of seventy-six, now "took the ribbons" in France.

Events were converging towards the final agony on the Western front. In a speech on July 24th, 1919,* Mr. Lloyd George made a curious revelation about a prophecy of Sir Henry Wilson's in the month of January, 1918. This great soldier, who was afterwards to die so tragically, foretold that the Germans "were going to concentrate 100 divisions opposite the British front and were going to put the whole of their strength into breaking our line on a very wide front, in the Cambrai district to the South, in order to sever the French and the British armies." Mr. Lloyd George was justified in describing this as "one of the most remarkable predictions in the history of military strategy." Yet, like most prophets, Sir Henry was not believed. The British, at the repeated request of the French, assumed responsibility for a portion of the French line twenty-eight miles in length just where the attack, according to the prediction, was to take place, and no serious attempt seems to have been made to strengthen the line at the new junction. The result was that between

* Mr. Lloyd George also alluded to the prediction in his speech on April 9, 1918.

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the Somme and the Oise General Gough had less than a bayonet a yard.*

But, if these needs seemed to be neglected, the principle of united war-control was pushed forward. On February 4th it was officially announced that the functions of the Supreme War Council had been enlarged, that the principles of unity of policy and action which had been initiated at Rapallo in November, 1917, had received still further development. This had been effected with complete Allied unanimity. It was understood that the Council had been endowed with executive powers—that is, with the ability to execute its decisions with regard to military operations in the West without referring these decisions to the respective governments for approval or disapproval. There was to be no home interference with the policy of the Council.

On February 12th, in the House of Commons, Mr. Asquith challenged Mr. Lloyd George on this subject. He looked with distrust, he said, on the gift of executive powers to the Supreme War Council. But the Prime Minister was not on this occasion to be drawn into any communication of what had happened. He begged Mr. Asquith not to press the Government to give information which any intelligence officer on the other side would gladly pay large sums of money to get. If the House of Commons did not trust the existing Government, they must set up another. To a question whether the Commander-in-Chief and Sir William Robertson had approved the changes at Versailles, the Prime Minister replied: "Certainly, they were present and all representatives approved."

But rumour was busy with the doings at Versailles. On February 15th the Press Bureau was authorized to announce that no official ground existed for certain statements in the Press concerning Sir William Robertson. Yet on the next day an official statement was issued which

* See Pollard: "Short History of the War," p. 320.

RESIGNATION OF SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON

contained rather startling news. Sir William Robertson was Chief of the Imperial General Staff and widely respected as a man who by his own exertions and character had raised himself from the ranks to the highest places in the military service. The official statement ran thus :

The extension of the functions of the Permanent Military Representative decided on by the Supreme War Council at their last meeting at Versailles has necessitated a limitation of the special powers hitherto exercised by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff by virtue of the Order in Council of January 27th, 1906.

In these circumstances the Government thought it right to offer to General Sir William Robertson the choice of becoming British Military Representative on the Supreme War Council at Versailles, or of continuing as Chief of the Imperial Staff under the new conditions.

Sir William Robertson . . . did not see his way to accept either position and the Government have, with much regret, accepted his resignation.

General Sir Henry Wilson has accepted the position of Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

This was remarkable coming after the *démenti* by the Press Bureau and Mr. Lloyd George's own statement that Sir William Robertson had approved the changes in the Supreme War Council. It is obvious, however, from Sir William's own reminiscences* that he was out of touch with the system and policy at Versailles. "The establishment of the Council," he writes, "filled a much-felt want. But members of the Council were Ministers and, therefore, it was a political and not a military body." Again: "The Council did nothing to improve the system

* "From Private to Field-Marshal."

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of military command, while in one respect it struck deeply at the root principle of all military organization in that the technical advisers "were empowered to advise the Council *i.e.*, their Ministers, independently of their general staffs." And still more revealingly: "It seems clear that in setting up the Council the real object of Ministers was not so much to provide effective unity of military command as to acquire for themselves a greater control over the military chiefs."

Some supreme executive control was needed to secure the distribution of strategical reserves with a single eye to the Allied interest. Some single authority must decide where French troops should be brought up to support British and British to support French. Otherwise delay and destruction were inevitable. It was this necessity which afterwards, at an acutely critical moment, forced the appointment of a Generalissimo. Sir William Robertson thought this important function should be jointly performed by the Chiefs of the General Staffs of the Allied Armies. He thought the Chief of the British General Staff ought also to be the military representative on the Versailles Council. The French had appointed their own Chief of Staff, General Weygand, to be the French representative on the Council, and in the same way the Americans had appointed General Bliss to be theirs, while the Italians were represented by an officer deputed by General Cadorna, who was Chief of the Italian General Staff. Sir William suggested to Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War, that this arrangement should be made.

But the Government had decided on a different plan. The technical advisers of the Council, with General Foch as President, were constituted into an Executive Committee composed to determine the strength, dispositions and employment of reserves and to issue orders to the Commanders-in-Chief, subject, it is to be supposed, to the approval of the Council itself. This Committee, writes

INCOMPATIBLES

Sir William Robertson, thus became in effect the High Command of the Armies.

But, the reader may ask, why did Sir William resign when he had been offered the place of military representative at Versailles? His objections were at least logical. His proposal was that the British Chief of Staff should be the representative at Versailles and that, as he could not always be present, he should appoint a deputy to take his place in case of emergency. It is true he was offered the Versailles position, but at the same time Sir Henry Wilson was to succeed him as Chief of the British Imperial General Staff. The two functionaries were to co-exist. While the C.I.G.S. continued to be the supreme military adviser of the Government, the military representative at Versailles was to be absolutely free and unfettered in the advice he gave as a member of the Executive Committee. Sir William's motives, which have caused a good deal of perplexity to commentators on these events, are illumined in a single sentence of his own: "I resolved I could be no party to a system which established a dual authority for the military direction of the war."

We need not inquire too deeply into the personal factor in these happenings. There had certainly been occasional "breezes" between Mr. Lloyd George and Sir William Robertson, both of whom had climbed to the highest station from humble beginnings. On the long and general controversy between West and East the two men had taken opposite sides. Only recently Sir William had come into collision with the Prime Minister by opposing the continuance of military operations in Palestine after the capture of Jerusalem. He had complained that it was impossible to keep moving divisions "between Picardy and Palestine," and strongly averred that all available troops were wanted on the Western front. Mr. Lloyd George paid a high tribute to the late C.I.G.S. in his

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speech of February 19th, and the unknowing reader might almost have gathered that the hearts of the two men had been wrung and that great tears stood in their eyes at the parting. One cannot help recalling that Lord Derby, on communicating the decision to Sir William Robertson, had told him bluntly that "the Prime Minister could not agree with him." There was much truth in the simple statement that "the Prime Minister wished to try another C.I.G.S." Anyhow, Sir William Robertson strongly insisted that he had not resigned.

But in dwelling on these semi-personal proceedings we must not miss the main point, that the powers of the Supreme War Council had now been enlarged with the object of securing a more perfect unity of military control. The new system passed readily in the following month into the single personal command of General Foch.

On February 19th Mr. Lloyd George dealt with these controversial events in the House of Commons. He referred to the resignation or dismissal of Sir William Robertson, whose objection, he said, "was taken not on technical or constitutional but on military grounds." This may not have conveyed much definite information, but the House was overwhelmingly in sympathy with the Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith's attempts at formal opposition on these occasions received little patience or tolerance from the members. Cries of "Get on with the war," "Men are dying in the trenches while we're talking," and others of the same sort indicated the temper of the House. Party and personal bickerings were not approved at such a critical time. The Prime Minister's appeal at the close of his speech on February 19th hit exactly the humour of most members :

"I do beg this House . . . to close all controversy and to close our ranks. If this policy, deliberately adopted by the representatives of the great Allied

THE BATTLE OF ST. QUENTIN

countries in Paris, does not commend itself to the House, turn it down quickly and put in a Government who will go and say they will not accept it. But it must be another Government. But do not let us keep the controversy alive. The Government are entitled to know, and I say so respectfully, and to know to-night, whether the House of Commons and the nation wish the Government to proceed upon a policy deliberately arrived at with a view to organizing our forces to meet the onset of the foe. For my part—and I should only like to say one personal word—during the time I have held this position I have endeavoured to discharge its terrible functions to the utmost limits of my capacity and strength. If the House of Commons to-night repudiates the policy for which I am responsible and on which I believe the saving of the country depends, I shall quit office with but one regret, and that is that I have not had greater strength and greater ability to place at the disposal of my native land in the gravest hour of its danger.”

Considering the fiery trial through which Britain and the Allies were about to pass, Mr. Lloyd George's appeal was well justified. This speech was delivered on February 19th. On March 21st following, the stupendous German attack on our lines at St. Quentin took place. Ludendorff had long been preparing this final blow. He rightly judged that nothing would confirm the failing constancy of the German Allies in the Near East better than a resounding victory in the West. It was to be the most Titanic assault ever delivered in the whole history of war. There can be no doubt about its full-dress character. Ludendorff, who staked on it his own fortunes and the existence of the German Reich, fully appreciated its magnitude and magnificence. He told the Kaiser at Homburg on February 13th that the battle in the West was “the

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greatest military task that has ever been imposed upon an army." He was himself, he said, "more than any one impressed by the immensity of the undertaking." He reported to the Emperor on that occasion that "the Army was assembled and well prepared to undertake the biggest task in history." The Kaiser, according to Mr. Lloyd George,* spoke thus on the subject of the coming battle: "I shall beat them, for they have no united command." Even then that statement was not accurate, and was wholly belied immediately after the great blow had fallen.

The Government of Mr. Lloyd George has been criticised for not appointing Foch as Generalissimo in time to meet the great offensive. It is easy for academic historians to be wise after the event and to distribute praise and blame from that advantageous standpoint. The statesman, whose problems are in the present and the near but dim future, has to think and act amid the conditions that surround him. Among these is the state of public opinion. In this development of the single war authority, Mr. Lloyd George and his like-minded friends here and abroad could not move too abruptly ahead of public feeling. "I tried repeatedly, to the best of my power," he said on May 24th at Edinburgh, "to achieve unity, but I had to approach it by easy stages, and I am very sorry I nearly upset the Government several times in doing so. It is incredible that for many months we had to fight every inch of the way for unity of direction against potent influences." If Mr. Lloyd George had attempted to place the British armies under French command in January or February of 1918, there might have been a cry that "shivered to the tingling stars," and the step might have become permanently impossible. But when the stroke had fallen and our armies were in retreat and the Allied cause was in extreme and critical danger, the advance from the

* Speech, April 9, 1918.

THE DISPATCH OF REINFORCEMENTS

Supreme War Council to the single personal command became at once possible.

Here, too, we may anticipate by allusion to another adverse criticism which is rather better founded. In his speech of April 9th (1918) Mr. Lloyd George took credit to his Government for the promptitude with which reinforcements were sent to France—that is, after the great attack had been made. Again in August, 1918, the Prime Minister dwelt with pride on the reminiscence that in a fortnight's time 268,000 men were thrown across the Channel—"one of the most remarkable efforts of British shipping, of organization of British transport and of the War Office." In a month's time 355,000 men had been passed across the Channel. But if these troops were not "too late," in Mr. Lloyd George's favourite phrase, to take any part in the prolonged battle, they were too late to prevent the terrible disaster that fell on the Fifth Army under General Gough. Why was the sector where the British and French armies joined and where the Government had been warned that the great blow would fall, not strengthened with these new troops or with better troops whose place in less threatened parts they might have taken?

The simplest and perhaps truest explanation is that the Government was not infallible and did fail to provide adequately for the coming ordeal. But here, too, we may in fairness reflect that this stupendous attack seemed by no means so inevitably ordained before it happened as it appears to us in the retrospect. Prophets are seldom believed until their prophecies have come true—that is, until it is too late. And then the factor of public opinion comes in here also. The majority of the troops who were thus rushed across the Channel in a desperate emergency were boys under nineteen or recruits physically almost unfit for service. The Government was bound by an undertaking that youths under 19 should not be sent to

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the front unless under extreme necessity. The required condition was now abundantly fulfilled, but thousands of parents and friends, as well as the public conscience in general, would or might have protested against sending these schoolboys into the firing line before compelling cause had been shown. The Government ought perhaps to have taken that risk, but here again to be fair we must revert in thought and imagination to all the conditions, political and psychological, existing in the weeks and days preceding the steam-hammer stroke of March 21st. Even as it was, the feeding of the furnace with these emergency troops was a poignant affair, for time did not even permit of leave being given to these lads of eighteen to say farewell to their relations.

Sir Henry Wilson's prophecy was exactly fulfilled as to the place, scope and object of the German offensive. The attack opened on March 21st. These words are written on the ninth anniversary of the event, and the "in memoriam" notices in the *Times* bear sad but eloquent testimony to the terrific violence of the blow. "Near St. Quentin, March 21st," occurs again and again. "In brave endeavour to stem the enemy advance" is another vivid, sad and proud reminiscence. Never in the history of the world has such a tonnage of human flesh been launched against fortified positions. Ninety-seven German divisions—that is, three or four times as heavy a weight as was thrown against the French at Verdun—took part in this spring offensive. Forty divisions were hurled against General Gough, who held with only fourteen divisions that portion of the British line recently taken over from the French. But the whole attack enveloped a front of fifty miles, from Arras southwards. Along that stretch the German armies broke through by the sheer impact of superior forces. Gough's force sustained the severest defeat that ever happened to British arms. His Fifth Army almost ceased to exist. The Third Army,

A GREAT MILITARY DISASTER

under General Byng, strove to save the situation, and the French threw in some few divisions south of the Somme. But the Third was involved in the calamity to the Fifth, and on April 4th the Germans had captured 90,000 prisoners and 1,300 guns, and were closely threatening Amiens. The loss of that place would have meant the severance of the French and British armies and communications by the interposition of the broad river Somme. This was, indeed, the main objective of the attack. The fall of Amiens might thus have led to the capture of Paris and to the final victory of the Central Powers.

Few who lived through this crisis will forget the anxiety of the time, though it must be allowed the nation watched these events with a *sang froid* which in the retrospect seems remarkable, if not in some degree unreasonable. For it could not know, as now we know from Ludendorff's revelations, that the German "home-front" was hopelessly demoralized and that the British blockade had produced a state of semi-starvation in the ranks of the German army.

At the height of the peril, when Amiens seemed about to fall, Mr. Lloyd George acted with a swift and sudden resolution. Salvation on the broken front depended on the full use of strategical reserves and the free movement of forces along the French and British lines. This could be effected only by placing the entire Franco-British armies under a single command. It has been well said that the British forces were always inclined to dress by the left in order to defend their sea sector and the Channel ports, while the French were equally prone to dress by the right in order to save Paris. These instincts were not calculated to strengthen the Allied front at the central junction point of the French and British armies on the Somme. The appointment of a Generalissimo who could be trusted to consider the problem of the Western front as a whole and provide for security and success regardless of national susceptibilities, had become a vital necessity.

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There was not a moment to lose if the necessary reserves were to be thrown in and the situation saved. On March 24th, in the midst of the stupendous assault whose thunder could be distinctly heard in Broadstairs and Ramsgate, Mr. Lloyd George dispatched Lord Milner to a little town called Doullens a few miles from Amiens. There, as we may understand, with the Germans advancing westwards at speed along the Somme, the full meaning of the situation would be acutely realized. M. Poincaré presided over the Conference at which Lord Milner, Sir Douglas Haig, M. Clemenceau, General Foch, Sir Henry Wilson, and General Pétain were present.

Various suggestions were made to meet the emergency. But every member of the Conference must have known that one measure alone would suffice. M. Clemenceau had made up his mind, and so had Lord Milner as representing the Prime Minister. No opposition was likely from Sir Douglas Haig, who revealed on the occasion a high spirit of public duty and self-sacrifice. The individual thoughts quickly crystallized into a resolution drafted originally by M. Clemenceau, which was adopted without discussion and signed by Lord Milner and M. Clemenceau. It may be interesting to give the brief but fateful resolution in its French dress :

Le Général Foch est chargé par les gouvernements britanniques et français de coordonner l'action des armées alliées sur le front ouest. Il s'entendra à cet effet avec les deux généraux-en-chef qui sont invités à lui fournir tous les renseignements nécessaires.

Doullens, le 26 Mars, 1918.

This in English :

General Foch is charged by the British and French Governments to co-ordinate the action of the Allied armies on the Western Front. He will come to arrange-

FINDING A REMEDY FOR THE DISASTER

ments to this effect with the two Commanders-in-Chief, who are requested to furnish him with all the necessary information.

Doullens, March 26th, 1918.

Thus was the policy of Rapallo at last consummated. Public opinion, both in the British Army and in the nation behind it, approved or acquiesced. The need was desperate, and there was no disposition in general to criticize a drastic remedy. But this should not diminish our appreciation of the courage it required to take the step, to place the entire British Army, so glorious in record and tradition, so sensitive in honour, so proud in spirit, under the command of a foreign leader. In truth, there was a section in the army and among the politicians which was determined to bring up these recent events for review and challenge, in order to discredit, and if possible to bring down, Mr. Lloyd George and his Government.

But meanwhile the new appointment seemed to justify itself at once. General Pétain's reserves, which might otherwise not have been available, were thrown into the battle for Amiens, and the German bid for that key position was soon checkmated. Through these terrible days Mr. Lloyd George abated no jot of heart and hope. He passed again and again between England and France, speeding off the reinforcements from the former and in the latter holding council with Foch and Clemenceau ; the three men forming at this time a virtual supreme triumvirate for the conduct of the war.

But no one could say what forces the Germans controlled and where and when they might deliver an attack that might prove irresistible and decisive. One reflects almost with a shudder what might have happened if Ludendorff at the height of his success had made new and specious overtures of peace. We might have compromised the whole Allied cause even at the dark hour which

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immediately preceded the dawn. It was hidden from our eyes that these German victories were only the spasmodic efforts of an organism whose strength and vitality had almost perished in a long and enucleating struggle. That the nation came through these trials must be ascribed in large measure to Mr. Lloyd George's example and precept. He never despaired, and there is no ground for the suggestion that the "chill of terror" entered his soul in these days. It is true he had already remarked that if the war went wrong there could be nothing for him but a jump from Westminster Bridge. But he was not minded to make that plunge before the necessity came.

He was now to achieve another service to his country and the Allies which the bitterest of his critics and opponents do not fail to acknowledge. While the Allied forces in Europe were hardly bearing up against the violence of the German assaults, a reserve of power was due to enter the war on their side which must inevitably turn the tide of war and carry the Allies to complete victory.

America had been nominally in the war for nearly a year. She had been engaged in building a national army on the approved divisional pattern, and the process of training and organizing had proved much longer than was anticipated. The Germans seem themselves not to have expected to cross swords with an American on the Western front before the year 1919 or 1920, and meanwhile their submarines were multiplying to the utmost the perils of the Atlantic passage. It was at the height of the crisis on the Western front that Mr. Lloyd George became conscious that the recruits sent to the front from this country might prove insufficient to redress the balance and that nothing but the effectual entrance into the war of the great Ally out there beyond the sunsets could deal the *coup de grâce* and make an end of the long agony.

In ordinary circumstances a long diplomatic process might have been necessary to effect this purpose. Dis-

AMERICA TO THE RESCUE

patches would have been sent explaining the nature of the emergency and dispatches returned explaining the reasons of delay and promising such acceleration as might be possible. Mr. Lloyd George's method was different. Just as he had roused the Allies from their apathy by the famous indiscretions of his Paris speech, so now he took the suddenest means of impressing the American Government with the emergency on the Western front. He chose the swiftest means of communication available. A statesman in a similarly tight corner will in the future have the advantage of wireless telephony. Mr. Lloyd George sent his SOS along the ocean bed. Telegram after telegram he sent to President Wilson through Lord Reading, the British representative, and President Wilson understood.

If the British statesman had to make some sacrifice and brave some national offence in thus appealing for help, the American President had likewise something to concede. Happily the President was as unfettered with convention as the Prime Minister. He not only responded promptly to the request for immediate reinforcements, but consented to allow the American troops to be brigaded with French and British and thus to be merged for the time being in these two foreign armies. It was an act of splendid loyalty on the part of the American President and people which must always deserve honourable mention from the chronicler of the war.

And so the American legions came across in the teeth of all perils by sea and air, crowded on the warships and transports which in vast armadas had been organized for the purpose on both sides of the water. There was a deep and striking significance in the spectacle of the New World thus returning to save the civilization of the Old. The pibroch of Donald Dhu never set the clans moving faster than the signal for help brought the vigorous and resourceful sons of the West to the battlefields of "Old Europe."

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In the month of April 120,000 Americans landed on the French coast, over 200,000 in May and 275,000 in June. On July 2nd President Wilson announced that over a million men had sailed, and before the summer was over that number was doubled.* The situation was saved and doubly saved, though the Allies had still to pass through many a fiery ordeal. The new blood thus infused into the Allied veins soon began to tell, and the end could not be far off.

It may be said that Mr. Lloyd George crowned and completed his services to the Allied cause by his prompt and unconventional appeal to the United States and the tremendous energy he threw into the task of bringing the legions across the perilous waters. That duty accomplished, he might almost have said with Antony : "Unarm, Eros ; the long day's task is done."

The statesman's work was indeed almost over. The forces adequate to the desired result had been brought to bear on the long conflict, and there was little to do but to await their sure operation.

Mr. Lloyd George's own account of this memorable "hustle" must be given. Speaking at Leeds, when all was over, on December 7th, he said :

"I shall never forget that morning when I sent a cable to President Wilson telling him what the facts were and how it was essential that we should get American help at the speediest possible rate, inviting him to send 120,000 infantrymen and machine-gunners per month to Europe, and if he did that, we would do our best to help to carry them. I sent that telegram across to Lord Reading, and the following day came a telegram from President Wilson : 'Send your ships across and we will send the 120,000 men.' Then I invited Sir Joseph Maclay, the Shipping Controller,

* See Pollard : "Short History of the War," p. 330.

THE SHIPS OF BRITAIN

to 10, Downing Street, and said : ‘ Send every ship you can.’ They were all engaged in essential trades, because we were cut down right to the bone. There was nothing that was not essential. We said, ‘ This is the time for taking risks.’ We ran risks with our food ; we ran risks with essential raw materials. We said, ‘ The thing to do is to get these men across at all hazards.’ America sent 1,900,000 men across, and out of that number 1,100,000 were carried by the British Mercantile Marine. The good old ships of Britain—the ships which have saved the liberty of the world many a time : saved it in the days of Queen Elizabeth ; saved it in the days of Louis XIV ; saved it in the days of Napoleon ; saved it in the days of Kaiser Wilhelm II.”

Yet the Allies had still many a battle to fight, though Ludendorff’s first offensive was at last stayed by the defeat on March 28th of his attempt upon Arras and of Von Hutier’s final effort to reach Amiens on April 4th. This last terrific attack by twenty divisions came near succeeding, but was thwarted by the stubborn resistance and counter-attacks of the British troops, among whom the Australians and Canadians won imperishable laurels. The enemy had penetrated deeply into territory held by the Allies and left a broad zone of devastation behind them, but they had failed in their objective.

The publication of war memories by famous German leaders, especially those of General Ludendorff, enables us to observe these great events from the other side. Dealing with this first act of the 1918 offensive, the General writes :

“ The battle was over by the 4th April. It was a brilliant feat, and will ever be so regarded in history. What the English and French had not succeeded in doing we had accomplished, and that in the fourth year

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of the war. Strategically we had not achieved what the events of the 23rd, 24th and 25th had encouraged us to hope for. That we had also failed to take Amiens, which would have rendered communication between the enemy's forces astride the Somme extremely difficult, was especially disappointing. Long-range bombardment of the railway establishments of Amiens was by no means an equivalent. However, our troops had beaten the French and English and proved themselves superior. That they did not achieve all the success that was possible was due, not only to their reduced fighting value, but, above all, to their not being always under the firm control of their officers. They had been checked by finding food-depots, and valuable time had thus been lost."

The last sentence is significant. Despite all the Germans had "conveyed" for themselves from Russia and Rumania, our blockade was evidently achieving its object, and the Germans were now fighting not simply the armed forces of the Allies but the spectre of actual famine.

Ludendorff can have had no self-delusions about the meaning of his failure before Amiens. The main object of his whole offensive was to sever the connection between the British and French armies, to do this before the American army was in the field, and thus to establish the conditions in which the Central Powers might make a peace not too unfavourable to themselves. Indeed, Ludendorff himself, commenting later on the failure of these spring and summer attacks, remarks that "the attempt to make the nations of the Entente inclined to peace before the arrival of the American reinforcements by means of German victories had failed."* It would have been well for him if he had grasped the full implication of his failure before Amiens on April 4th, and made such terms as were then possible.

* "My War Memories." Vol. II, p. 677.

LUDENDORFF'S DILEMMA

But he was too deeply committed to withdraw. The existence of the German Reich and of that Junkerdom to which he himself belonged depended on an unambiguous victory at this time on the Western front. He was thus driven to renew his assault on the British lines at another point. It has been suggested that the two next assaults, in the north against the British and in the south against the French along the Chemin des Dames, were intended originally as diversions from the central attack on Amiens, and that Ludendorff had in mind to renew this latter as soon as circumstances permitted. But renew it he never did. He allowed both these secondary to develop into major operations. The offensive on the south became indeed a substantive bid for the capital. But all through these operations Ludendorff must have had an ill-boding conscience. He must have seen the scripture on the wall and have heard, in Mr. Spender's vivid words, the "tolling of the bell of doom." He had broken himself in vain against the valour and constancy of the British soldier at Arras and Amiens, and the forces of the United States, as he knew, were beginning to pour in in ever-broadening spate.

On April 9th he opened his attack on the British positions in the north where the British had kept guard over the Channel ports since the beginning of the war. About no part of their long front were the British more sensitive. A reverse here or a retreat on the scale which had just been necessary at St. Quentin would mean a retirement southwards in order to maintain connection with the French, the consequent loss of the Channel ports with all the implications thereof—namely, the severer submarine attack, the bombardment of our shores and, perhaps, even London, the greater difficulty of communication with our armies on the Continent; perhaps, even, the invasion which Napoleon had nearly attempted over a hundred years before. Sir Douglas Haig had had to

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weaken his position here by sending some fresh divisions south to the help of Amiens. Moreover, a part of the front between the Lys and La Bassée was held by Portuguese troops whom he was only in the act of replacing by war-worn divisions from the south when Ludendorff opened his assault on our positions south of the Lys.

The Portuguese, giving way before the onset, exposed our flanks on either side, and the Germans were soon swarming westwards. Position after position fell along the Lys and south of it, and it seemed likely that the Germans would penetrate as deeply here where we had narrower room to retire as farther south along the Somme. But the situation was saved and a westward limit set to the advancing tide by the resistance of the 55th division at Givenchy. Farther north the Germans also won much territory. Many people will recall the cold shiver with which they read on the London news-bills in that anxious springtime the announcement of the fall of Armentières. Many other positions fell in quick succession—Estaires, Ploegsteert, Lestrem, Merris, Merville, but Bethune was saved by a firm resistance at Robecq.

The decisive position was the high land between Mount Kemmel and Mont des Cats, the possession of which would have secured command of the coast. Three more attacks were launched: north of Ypres, where the Belgians made a successful resistance; southwards at Bethune, where the enemy was again held up, and on April 25th on Mount Kemmel. That historic hill was finally captured, but all attempts to extend the success to the Kemmel range were vain. Operations continued well into May, but this second offensive on the British front was everywhere brought to a virtual standstill before the end of April. The Germans had done their worst, they had launched their heaviest available masses and employed their ablest and newest tactics against the British front, but that front, though drawn back to other lines, remained steadfast

A MEMORABLE SPEECH

there and frustrated every German objective. The enemy made, on April 23rd, some show of renewing the attack just south of the Somme on the new British line, but he promptly lost again what he gained, and our line was even moved forward. The next German assault was to be directed not against the British but against the French on the Chemin des Dames, on May 27th. And the next important event on the Somme took place on that ever-famous August 8th, when the British began their march to final victory up that river towards St. Quentin right along the tracks by which they had fallen back in March before the smashing impact of the German masses.

But meanwhile interesting events had been happening on the British "home-front." On April 9th, the day on which Ludendorff had attacked the British front in Flanders, Mr. Lloyd George brought into the House of Commons his new Military Service Bill. It provided for the replacement for home defence of the younger recruits just sent out by older men, raising the military age to fifty and, in specified cases, such as the medical services, to fifty-five. At the same time conscription was extended to Ireland, a measure which should have been applied far earlier and was now ineffectual.

No Minister ever rose in Parliament with more embarrassingly abundant material for a speech than Mr. Lloyd George on this occasion. Primary events had happened since his last pronouncement. He had to give an account up to date of the German attacks, to offer some defence against the criticisms of the Government over the Gough reverse, to report on the appointment of General Foch as Generalissimo, and to relate how the American reinforcements had been speeded up. In the face of the recent reverses and future trials on the Western front, he deemed it desirable to show that the Government had not depleted our forces there. His own record as an "Easterner" made such a defence seem the more necessary.

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He proceeded to make a series of brief statements on this subject. "Notwithstanding the heavy casualties in 1917, our Army in France was considerably stronger on January 1st, 1918, than on January 1st, 1917." "Up to the end of 1917—up to, say, about October or November—" he continued, "the German combatant strength in France was as two to the Allied three. Then came the military collapse of Russia, and the Germans hurried up their released divisions from the Eastern front and brought them to the West. They had a certain amount of Austrian support which has been accorded to them. Owing to the growth of the strength of our armies in 1917, when this battle began, the combatant strength of the whole of the German army on the Western front was only, approximately though not quite, equal to the total combatant strength of the Allies. In infantry they were slightly inferior; in artillery they were inferior; in cavalry they were considerably inferior; and, what is very important, they were undoubtedly inferior in aircraft."

Mr. Lloyd George had obviously been provided with carefully compiled figures. He went on to deal with the more specific question of the side-shows in the East. Not a single division, he said, had been sent from France to the East. True, there were British troops on the Italian front, but the presence of Italian, French and British divisions there had prevented Austria from sending unlimited reinforcements to the West. As regards Salonica, the only thing the Government had done was to reduce the forces there by three divisions. In Mesopotamia there was only one white division; in Palestine and Egypt, taken together, there were only three, the rest being either Indians or mixed with a very small proportion of British troops in those divisions. The same story was told on the same day by Lord Curzon in the House of Lords, who assured his noble hearers that "so far from our forces at Salonica having been increased, it was a matter of common

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knowledge that they had been considerably reduced for the sake of the Western front." This last phrase was certainly not the pure Washingtonian truth, for though two divisions had indeed been removed from Salonica, they had been sent, not to Picardy, but to Palestine. Such inaccuracy was unfortunate though, no doubt, unintentional.

These apologies added more fuel to the controversy which had begun to burn on the subject of General Gough's defeat and deposition. It was believed in certain military and other quarters that the extension of the British front in France had been forced by the British War Cabinet, which was generally an *alias* for Mr. Lloyd George, on an unwilling and protesting Commander-in-Chief; that the Government had refused him the reinforcements made necessary by that measure; that Mr. Lloyd George, in this speech of April 9th, was minded to shoulder off the responsibility for the March reverse on to the Army, and that poor General Gough, who had been relieved of his command, had simply been sent into the wilderness as a scapegoat.

These opinions and rumours were likely to provide convenient political capital for the opposition to Mr. Lloyd George and his Government. It is true the times were desperately critical, but party and political feeling is too strong in the human breast to be diverted from its objects even by that consideration. The controversy was bound to blow up into a political crisis. On April 23rd questions were asked in the House of Commons about the disaster to the Fifth Army, and whether this part of the line had been taken over from the French contrary to the advice of Sir Douglas Haig. In reply Mr. Bonar Law stated that "there was not the smallest justification for the suggestion that this portion of the line was taken over contrary to the judgment of Sir William Robertson and Sir Douglas Haig." The arrangements, he went on to

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say with perfect truth, had been made entirely by the British and French authorities. Then came the question whether the Commander-in-Chief had not protested against the extension of the line owing to the short number of the divisions at his disposal. Again Mr. Bonar Law negatived. "Naturally," he said, "with two armies there has been difference of opinion as to the extent of line that should be taken over by each." Representations often occurred between the two Governments on the subject, but they were always left to the military authorities to decide. Of course, if they had not agreed, the decision would have had to be taken by the two Governments, but such an occasion did not arise. Finally, the Chancellor of the Exchequer stated that this particular matter of the extension of the line was not considered by the Versailles Council.

Considering the times they lived in, most people might have been satisfied with these official assurances. But the feeling against the Government was not so easily appeased. Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, until just lately Director of Military Operations, was far from being satisfied. He was disgruntled on a variety of subjects—the dismissal of Sir William Robertson and the military policy of the Government in the East among others—and he had given a willing ear to the voices in the Army which complained that the Government had shirked its real responsibility for the awful disaster in March.

He conceived the idea, therefore, of committing professional suicide by writing a letter to the newspapers. This course was a flat transgression of No. 453 of the King's Regulations promulgated by the Army Order of 1913, which defined a soldier's duty in relation to the public Press. "An officer or soldier," ran the salutary rule, "is forbidden to publish in any form whatever or communicate either directly or indirectly to the Press any military information or his views on any military subject without

SIR FREDERICK MAURICE'S LETTER

special authority." Even before that Regulation was made, soldiers, among whom had been Generals Buller and Colville, had suffered for making public speeches and statements in the newspapers.

But Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice imagined that his duty to his country on this occasion overrode all claims of military discipline, and he not only wrote his letter but "prented" it. It was a conspicuous and interesting feature in the *Times* and other papers of May 7th. Whether it will withstand in interest the envious tooth of time and continue to be recorded by the Muse of History is another question. But here is the document :

" SIR,

" My attention has been called to answers given in the House of Commons on April 23rd by Mr. Bonar Law to questions put by Mr. G. Lambert, Colonel Burn and Mr. Pringle as to the extension of the British front in France (' Hansard,' vol. 105, No. 34, p. 815). These answers contain certain misstatements which in sum give a totally misleading impression of what occurred. This is not the place to enter into a discussion as to all the facts, but Hansard's report of the incident concludes :

" " MR. PRINGLE : Was this matter entered into at the Versailles War Council at any time ? ' "

" " MR. BONAR LAW : This particular matter was not dealt with at all by the Versailles War Council. ' "

" I was at Versailles when the question was decided by the Supreme War Council, to whom it had been referred.

" This is the latest of a series of misstatements which have been made recently in the House of Commons by the present Government.

" On April 9th, the Prime Minister said :

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“ ‘What was the position at the beginning of the battle? Notwithstanding the heavy casualties in 1917, the Army in France was considerably stronger on January 1st, 1918, than on January 1st, 1917.’ (‘Hansard,’ Vol. 104, No. 24, p. 1,328.)

“ That statement implies that Sir Douglas Haig’s fighting strength on the eve of the great battle which began on March 21st, had not been diminished.

“ That is not correct.

“ Again, in the same speech the Prime Minister said :

“ ‘In Mesopotamia there is only one white division at all, and in Egypt and in Palestine there are only three white divisions ; the rest are either Indians or mixed with a very small proportion of British troops in those divisions—I am referring to the infantry divisions.’ (Ibid., p. 1,327.)

“ That is not correct.

“ Now, Sir, this letter is not the result of a military conspiracy. It has been seen by no soldier. I am by descent and connexion as sincere a democrat as the Prime Minister, and the last thing I desire is to see the Government of our country in the hands of soldiers.

“ My reasons for taking the very grave step of writing this letter are that the statements quoted above are known by a large number of soldiers to be incorrect, and this knowledge is breeding such distrust of the Government as can only end in impairing the splendid *moral* of our troops at a time when everything possible should be done to raise it.

“ I have therefore decided, fully realizing the consequences to myself, that my duty as a citizen must override my duty as a soldier, and I ask you to

A LACK OF PROPORTION

publish this letter in the hope that Parliament may see fit to order an investigation into the statements I have made.

“ I am, Sir,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ F. MAURICE,

“ *Major-General.*

“ 20, KENSINGTON PARK GARDENS,

“ *May 6th, 1918.*”

To most readers of this effusion it must have been a puzzling question what was to be gained by convicting the Government of arithmetical inaccuracies at a moment when the fortunes of the whole war hung in the balance along the Western front. Even Sir Frederick Maurice scarcely accused His Majesty's Ministers of knowing the truth and deliberately publishing the contrary. Our civilization leaves much to be desired, but it may surely claim that it has eliminated the ethics of the jungle at least to that extent.

General Maurice's concentration on arithmetical purism at a moment of extreme national peril recalls the story of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine, who were afloat in the ocean on life-preservers after the foundering of their ship. In these critical circumstances one of the ladies produced some viands she had thoughtfully secured before they took to the water, and her sister in distress complained that she had not remembered the mustard ! The reader may also be reminded of another lady in peril of drowning who refused to allow a gentleman on the river bank to save her because she had not been introduced ! General Maurice betrayed a similar deficiency in the sense of proportion.

One wonders whether his imagination had forecast the results of the “ investigation ” he demanded proving adverse to the Government. The existing administration

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consisted of the three parties. It was a national coalition, formed on a non-party basis for the more effectual prosecution of the war. What did he propose to substitute for it? Did he think it wise to "swop horses" in the midst of the most appalling spate which the nation ever had to ford? The General's motives were, no doubt, chivalrous and unselfish. But his proceedings were none the less rash and mischievous, and ended in upsetting and discrediting not the Government but himself and the friends who exploited his grievances for political ends.

We can scarcely realize now the emotions created by these events. First impressions seemed to be unfavourable to Mr. Lloyd George, who had apparently been deserting his cobbler's last with a vengeance and interfering with purely military affairs. Mr. Asquith and his Opposition proceeded to make the most of the situation. On May 8th he drew attention in the House of Commons to the Maurice letter and asked what steps the Government proposed to take to enable the House to examine the allegations.

Mr. Bonar Law then stated that the letter-writer himself would be dealt with by the Army Council in the ordinary way, and that as the allegations affected the honour of Ministers the Government proposed to appoint a Court of Honour consisting of two judges to inquire into the alleged misstatements, and to report as quickly as possible. Whereupon Mr. Asquith, ill-advised in respect of his future influence and credit, tabled a motion that a Select Committee should be appointed "to inquire into the allegations of incorrectness in certain statements of Ministers of the Crown to this House contained in a letter of Major-General Maurice, late Director of Military Operations, published in the Press on the 7th day of May."

The Government soon decided to cancel their suggestion of a Court of Honour which had a mediæval and provençal flavour about it, and to rely on the Prime Minister's state-

"GET ON WITH THE WAR"

ment in the House of Commons, Mr. Asquith's motion being regarded as a formal vote of censure. On this latter point there could be no question. The Government issued a three-lined whip saying, "Mr. Asquith will move a resolution which, if carried, will be a vote of censure on the Government. A division is absolutely certain. Your attendance is most specially requested." The Opposition summons was no less emphatic.

The debate duly occurred on May 9th, with the result which most persons of any experience must have foreseen. General Maurice had been handed over to the military authorities, who quickly placed him on retired pay. Military opinion here and in France had taken the only possible view of his indisciplined action. But now the weapon too hurriedly seized by Mr. Asquith to strike down his opponent proved a boomerang of the most violent and injurious kind. He opened the debate and expounded his proposal for a Select Committee. "What is the alternative?" he asked. "Get on with the war," was the unexpected interpolation of a private member, who thus happily voiced the feeling of an overwhelming majority not only in the House but in the country outside.

Mr. Lloyd George had no difficulty in defending the Government, or rather in transferring to General Maurice the rôle of defendant. The figures given by the Prime Minister in his speech of April 9th had been supplied by General Maurice himself or by the Department over which he presided. The statement about Egypt and Palestine had been expressly made at a meeting of the War Cabinet at which Sir Frederick Maurice was present, and had not been challenged by him either then or when subsequently re-submitted to him for approval. The General, it also appeared, had not been "at Versailles" in the sense he was understood to convey—that is, present in the Council, but only in the neighbourhood of Versailles. But the most effective point made by Mr. Lloyd George

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was that though General Maurice met him day by day in War Cabinet meetings immediately after these challenged statements had been made, the General never once intimated to the Prime Minister the need of any correction.

Solvuntur risu tabulae. The defence was more than sufficient. There were amusing and memorable phrases in the speech. "He seems to think," the Prime Minister remarked of Mr. Asquith, "that all the violence, all the virulence is with the Press that does not agree with him. Why, I have been for the last two or three years, since I have thrown myself into the vigorous prosecution of the war, drenched with cocoa slops."

The Prime Minister's concluding appeal had a general response in the House and probably throughout the country also. It was surely not pitched too high, considering the position of affairs on the Western front, which was about to give rise to the coldest fit of anxiety hitherto experienced in the war.

"I wonder," said Mr. Lloyd George, "whether it is worth my while making another appeal to all sections of the House and to all sections of the country? These controversies are distracting, they are paralyzing, they are rending, and I beg that they should come to an end. It is difficult enough for Ministers to do their work in this war. We had a controversy which lasted practically for months over the unity of command. This is really a sort of remnant of it. The national unity is threatened, the Army unity is threatened, by this controversy. Days have been occupied in hunting up records and minutes and *procès-verbaux* and in interviews, and in raking up what happened for a whole twelve months in the War Cabinet. And this at this moment! I have just come back from France. I met some Generals and they were telling me how, now, the Germans are

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silently preparing the biggest blow of the war under a shroud of mystery, and they asked me for certain help. I brought home a list of the things they wanted done, and I wanted to attend to them. I really beg and implore, for our common country, the fate of which is in the balance now and in the next few weeks, that there should be an end of this sniping."

The division on Mr. Asquith's motion was eloquent of the state of parties in the House, and reflected public opinion outside. The leader of the Opposition could muster only 106 to vote for his motion, which was lost by an adverse majority of 187. The effects of the debate and division continued long after the incident was over. The nation had resented this attack upon a man who was obviously at the time bearing an unexampled burden of responsibility and who had just effected a great change in the supreme military command which had fully justified itself in the subsequent operations. The nation was impatient of personal and party attacks at such a moment, and we may date from this time that division in the Liberal Party which half a dozen years afterwards seemed irremediable. Mr. Lloyd George's prestige, on the other hand, was greatly enhanced, and carried him right on to the Genoa Conference, where he seemed to reach the zenith of his fame and authority.

While our statesmen were thus amusing themselves in England, the Germans were preparing for the new and third phase of the great offensive. Everybody was aware that this big battle was brewing. On May 24th, three days before it began, Mr. Lloyd George was speaking at Edinburgh, "on the eve," he said, "of a very great attack"; and he added, "those who know best what the prospects are feel most confident about the result." He recalled the declaration of peace terms made at the beginning of the year by the British Government and by

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President Wilson—terms of great moderation, such as even the extreme pacifist could not challenge. How had they been received by the Germans? By the most violent offensive ever launched against any army.

Happily the weakness of divided command had been removed. Mr. Lloyd George dwelt on the struggle “against potent influences” that great reform had cost him. “Now,” he said, “that we are approaching the third stage of the greatest battle ever fought on earth, for the greatest cause for which battles have ever been fought, a battle upon the issue of which depend greater consequences for the human race than from any other battle ever fought, I am glad to think that we have at the head of the forces of freedom a man of General Foch’s commanding genius.”

The Prime Minister had a good report to make about the submarine campaign which, he said, was no longer a peril. The organization of the merchant service, the cutting down of imports and the increase in home products such as ores, timber, wheat and other supplies, had, in conjunction with the purely naval measures, exorcised that danger. We were now sinking submarines faster than the Germans could build them, and building merchantmen faster than the Germans could destroy them. It is in his speeches that Mr. Lloyd George most fully reveals the secret of his character and influence. Here quoted is an example of the nice balance of his political judgment, of salutary truth aptly expounded to a popular audience :

“There are two types of extremists in every war. There is first of all the peace extremist ; he is always crying out ‘Peace’ when there is no peace. That type discredits peace, and makes peace difficult when the time comes for negotiating peace ; he is not a real friend to peace ; he is an enemy to peace ; he is a hindrance to peace ; he is an encouragement to

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the enemy ; he depresses his friends. Then there is the war extremist, who regards every thought of making peace as if it was treason to the State. The path of sanity and of safety which a Government ought to tread is between those two extremes. There were last year in this country, and in Allied countries, a very considerable number of people who had come to the conclusion that it was possible to achieve an honourable peace without victory. I think there are fewer of them now."

On May 27th the Germans duly cried "Havoc ! and let slip the dogs of war " for their last great venture in the West. This attack, probably designed at first only as a diversion from the central offensive along the Somme, took on a substantive character, with the capture of Paris as its objective. The Germans broke through the Chemin des Dames, which ought to have been impregnable, captured Soissons on the 29th, and on the 30th drove their spear-head across the Marne between Chateau-Thierry and Dormans. It had been a foray of three days with a gain of ten miles a day and a capture of 40,000 prisoners and 400 guns. Once more it seemed fated that Paris should fall. But the Americans were by this time well in the fight. The Allied forces were increasing every day, and the gateways to the capital were more and more strongly guarded. The final German attacks on either side of Rheims on July 15th were frustrated, and at dawn on July 18th General Foch, who had asked for the prayers of all religious people for his success, made that brilliant and tremendous counter-attack on the German right flank which compelled the enemy to fall back from their salient at the Marne and began the more general retreat of the entire German forces in France and Flanders. Then, on August 8th, the British under Rawlinson, with a French army on the right, struck east along a twenty-

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mile front on either side of the Somme, and began that great drive homewards of the German forces from position to position which was the last scene in the long war-drama.

"August 8th," writes Ludendorff, "was the black day of the German Army in the history of this war." The mighty German war-machine was at last shattered. The Kaiser told Ludendorff afterwards that after the failure of the July offensive and after August 8th, he knew the war could no longer be won. The Germans realized that the time had come for final negotiations. "Leadership," writes Ludendorff again after the fatal 8th, "now assumed the character of an irresponsible game of chance, a thing I have always considered fatal. The fate of the German people was for me too high a stake. The war must be ended."

Despite these earth-shaking and decisive events on the West, the Easterner may still claim, not with entire unreason, that the war was finally won in the "side-shows." Ludendorff himself mentions, as a worse experience for him than even August 8th, the events that from September 15th onwards took place on the Bulgarian front and sealed the fate of the Quadruple Alliance. By September 29th Bulgaria had been knocked out of the war as the result of a successful Allied offensive in which British, French, Greeks and Servians took part. By October 30th, brilliant operations under General Allenby had forced Turkey, after Bulgaria, to an armistice. Meantime the Italians, very strongly reinforced by British troops, had attacked on the Piave, and the Hapsburg Empire came crashing down on November 3rd, when one more armistice struck Germany's last "prop" from under her. To complete this brief record of decisive events, the final blow on the Western front was delivered on November 4th between Valenciennes and Oisy by General Haig on a thirty-mile front, and by the French farther south. Vast hordes of prisoners were

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captured. The advance moved rapidly forward, and by November 11th, the great Armistice Day, British forces entered Mons.

After the four years' agony the collapse of the enemy's resistance brought an immense relief to the nation and, perhaps above all other individuals, to Mr. Lloyd George. The plunge from Westminster Bridge would clearly be unnecessary. But the Prime Minister was not disposed to shout or let others shout prematurely. It is a remarkable trait in Mr. Lloyd George's temperament that he is able to temper eagerness with patience and impetuosity with self-command. We find him at Manchester, on September 12th, right in the midst of the Allies' victories, counselling sobriety and caution. It was true that there was "no crack in the joy-bells ringing in our hearts," but "we are not at the end of the journey," he said. "There are some more steep gradients to come. There may be dark tunnels, but they will be short. The worst is over. (Loud cheers.) I tell you that as one who has been watching from the inside closely for over four years. I do not think I have ever misled my countrymen as to the gravity of the position. I do not want to exaggerate the victory, for the end is not yet. Nor do I want anyone to minimize the victory: it is real, significant and important."

In this speech he began to foreshadow the approaching peace, and to lay down certain leading principles to which he was destined to give expression in many forms and places. "It must be a peace," he said, "that will lend itself to the common sense and conscience of the nation as a whole. It must not be dictated by extreme men on either side. . . . We must not arm Germany with a real grievance. . . . A Germany freed from military domination will be welcome into the great League of Nations." It was a bold thing thus to raise the standard of a pure and genuine liberalism, and to warn in the hour of triumph against the lower impulses of revenge and domination.

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Mr. Lloyd George, indeed, was not prophesying smooth things in this great speech in Manchester. He took the opportunity to warn the nation of the maladies which the war had revealed in its constitution. It was on this occasion that he uttered the famous words, "I solemnly warn my countrymen that you cannot maintain an *Ar* Empire with a *C3* population," an apophthegm which became almost at once a proverb.

Ludendorff had suggested to the German Government an armistice immediately after the Allied advance on August 8th. In the middle of September the Central Powers approached President Wilson for an armistice in accordance with his own Fourteen Points. They applied to the American President as a child appeals to the parent who he thinks has the softer and more indulgent heart. From Mr. Lloyd George and M. Clemenceau they expected much less sympathy than from the chief magistrate of a nation which held aloof from European politics, and had less direct and long-standing reasons for antagonism to Germany than France and England. The replies of the American President were firm and dignified. It must have quickly been obvious to the German statesmen and people that a peace based on the Fourteen Points would not work out quite as they expected.

President Wilson was, therefore, acting in September and October, during which months the negotiations between America and Germany continued, as the mouthpiece of the allied cause. For various reasons he spoke at this time with almost more weight and authority than Mr. Lloyd George, though his utterances were always more academic and, to use a detestable modern expression, more "high-brow" than those of the British statesman. On September 27th the American President laid down once more the basic principles of a just peace—this time in five points. These were :

PRESIDENT WILSON'S FIVE POINTS

1. Impartial justice must render no discrimination between those to whom we wish to be just and those to whom we wish to be unjust, and the equal rights of the several peoples concerned must be secured.

2. No special interest of any nation can be made the basis of any settlement which is not consistent with the common interest of all.

3. There can be no alliances or covenants within the League of Nations.

4. There can be no selfish economic combinations within the League, and no economic boycott except that wielded by the League itself as a means of discipline.

5. All treaties must be made known in their entirety.

On October 8th Germany sent her first definite Peace Note on her own account to President Wilson. It ran thus :

The German Government requests the President of the United States of America to take steps for the restoration of peace, to notify all belligerents of this request, and to invite them to delegate plenipotentiaries for the purpose of taking up negotiations.

The German Government accepts, as a basis for the peace negotiations, the programme laid down by the President of the United States in his Message to Congress of January 8th, 1918, and in his subsequent pronouncements, particularly in his address of September 27th, 1918.

In order to avoid further bloodshed, the German Government requests the President of the United States to bring about the immediate conclusion of a general armistice on land, on water, and in the air.

MAX, Prince of Baden,
Imperial Chancellor.

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To this the Secretary of State, Mr. Robert Lansing, replied asking if the German Government really accepted the terms laid down by the President, and intimating that the President would not feel at liberty to propose a cessation of arms to the Allied Governments so long as the armies of the Central Powers were upon their soil. The German reply of October 12th assured the President that the German Government was prepared to comply with his proposals as to the evacuation of French territory, and that it did accept the peace terms as he had formulated them. On October 14th the President replied that no arrangement could be accepted which did not provide absolutely satisfactory safeguards and guarantees of the maintenance of the present military supremacy of the armies of the United States and its Allies in the field. The Note got to much closer grips with Germany's war record and the character of her government. Before any armistice could be arranged there must be a dropping of her illegal and inhuman practices, and a radical change in her Constitution must be made if the Allies were to treat with her on any basis of confidence.

The German reply to this drastic message was such as might have been expected. Germany had been guilty of no inhuman practices. The Germanic statesmen seemed to be conscious that this would sound paradoxical to most persons outside the moral and political frontiers of the Central Powers. So, as a slight concession in the interests of peace, the German Government promised not to torpedo any more passenger ships, which apparently had not been an inhuman practice, though they could not guarantee that the new order would reach every submarine before its return. As regards the constitutional question, the President was informed that something resembling what we call responsible and parliamentary government had been established in Germany, Ministries having been made dependent on the confidence of the Reichstag.

PRESIDENT WILSON'S REPLY TO GERMANY

President Wilson's answer, on October 23rd, was not encouraging. The only armistice he would feel justified in submitting for consideration would be one which should leave the United States and the associated Powers in a position to enforce any arrangement that might be entered into, and to make a renewal of hostilities on the part of Germany impossible. The President was, therefore, transmitting the correspondence to the Allied Governments. The new constitutional arrangements seemed not to satisfy Mr. Wilson. He ended with a sentence or two which the Kaiser must have duly recognized as a notice to the Hohenzollerns to quit. "The nations of the world cannot trust the word of those who have hitherto been the masters of German policy. The United States can only deal with veritable representatives of the German people. If it must deal with the military masters and monarchical autocrats of Germany . . . it must demand not negotiations but surrender."

It may be doubted whether the President of the United States, in his concentration on basic principles and their impressive exposition, fully realized what the Germans intended by an armistice. They were aiming not so much at peace as at a renewal of hostilities under conditions more favourable to themselves. Ludendorff has suffered this cat to escape from the bag. He tells us in his *War Memories** how at six o'clock on the 28th of September he went down to Marshal von Hindenburg's room at headquarters. "I explained to him my views as to a peace offer and a request for an armistice. The position could only grow worse on account of the Balkan situation, even if we held our own in the West. Our one task now was to act definitely and firmly without delay. The Field-Marshal listened to me with emotion. He answered that he intended to say the same to me in the evening, that he had considered the whole situation carefully and thought the step necessary.

* Vol. II, page 721.

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We were also at one in the view that the armistice conditions would have to permit a regular and orderly evacuation of the occupied territory and the resumption of hostilities on our own borders." "From the military point of view," he added, "the first was a tremendous concession."

Perhaps not so tremendous after all. The German resistance on Allied territory was broken. On Ludendorff's own admission the *moral* of the German army had been terribly weakened. But even a shattered army might be expected to renew its spirit and energy when called upon to fight for the frontiers of its own native land. "Die Wacht am Rhein" would be sung with a new inspiration, and its fervent phrases realized in action :

"Am Rhein, am Rhein, am deutschen Rhein
Wir wollen alle Hüter sein."

This, at any rate, was what the Germans meant by armistice, and Mr. Lloyd George at once perceived the danger when President Wilson referred to the Allies as a whole the conduct of the negotiations. He saw how they might unwittingly be playing the German game and providing the enemy with the chance of a respite and a recovery of strength, to be followed by another campaign along a highly debatable frontier. It was another great service to the Allied fortunes that the British Prime Minister saw through the German design and straightway resolved to frustrate it. Nothing but disarmament of the enemy would secure to the Allies the fruit of their victory. This was the policy he took with him at once to Paris, where Foch and Clemenceau needed no persuading. A conference of all the Allies took place at Versailles, where the policy was ratified with like unanimity. President Wilson consented to some modification of his terms, in favour of England with regard to the control of the seas, and of France on the question of reparations.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The Conference then drew up its armistice terms in full detail. They were terribly severe. The armistice the Germans had to accept bore no resemblance to the Ludendorff aspiration. That great German leader, for whom it is impossible not to feel some respect and admiration, had been almost the first to suggest an armistice after the British stroke of August 8th, when even the civilian authorities were for continuing the struggle. He was as earnest in counselling the latter course when Wilson's final answer arrived. In his efforts to renew the fight on the Western front he had the full support of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, who on October 24th issued a telegram to the Army intimating that Wilson's answer was "a demand for unconditional surrender," and "for us soldiers a challenge to continue our resistance with all our strength."

But the German army and navy and nation were too far gone to respond to any such stimulus. An armistice on any terms had to be concluded. Events moved steadily towards the unlimited surrender of November 11th. On October 26th the Kaiser accepted Ludendorff's resignation, or, in briefer terms, dismissed him. On November 4th the German Government issued an order to the fleet to sail out and fight. The crews mutinied, and the mutiny became a revolt and a revolution which finally clinched President Wilson's remembered warning that the Allied Powers could not make a peace with the military autocrats who had begun the war. From coast to country, from village to city, the revolutionary spirit strode through the Fatherland. On November 8th Prince Max was succeeded as Chancellor by Herr Ebert. On the 7th the Kaiser tucked up his skirts and scurried off to safety in Holland. The old order had vanished never to return, unless the liberal Powers of Europe by a policy of impoverishment and depression so discredit the new freedom in Germany as to compel a return to a military autocracy.

The Armistice terms, by compelling the German

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surrender of their warlike equipment by land, sea and air and the withdrawal beyond the Rhine, did indeed, in Ludendorff's words, "make it impossible for Germany to resume hostilities" and "gave the nations allied against her unlimited power to settle themselves the details of the peace to be accepted by Germany." On November 11th the Armistice was signed, and on the 21st the German Navy, one time the pride of Kaiser and people, sailed in sad and lowly procession into a British harbour.

Two days before Germany drank this beer-pot of gall and wormwood, Mr. Lloyd George and a brilliant assembly feasted on victory and turtle in the Mansion House on Lord Mayor's Day. The Prime Minister was freshly returned from the palaver in Versailles. The long strain and the heavy burden were gone, and the opportunity and pleasure of vindicating the wisdom of Easternism, which he had professed so long against so much expert and adverse criticism, was not begrudged the great War Minister. There was a certain "punch" in his words, prompted by the memory of those controversies. The first sentences quoted are an example of that poetic eloquence which colours so many of Mr. Lloyd George's speeches:

"It was a remarkable week. Walking through the beautiful forests of Versailles—the leaves were falling, and these were not alone. Empires and kingdoms and kings and crowns were falling like withered leaves before a gale. It was a remarkable week. Bulgaria had just gone. Turkey went at the beginning of our Conference. Then followed Austria. You may ask why we delayed sending our terms to Germany, the most formidable of our foes. It was due to no disagreement among the Allies. We thought it better to begin by knocking the props from under her. It is an old policy that some of us have advocated for years, and it has come off at last. . . The settlement of

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Bulgaria opened up the flank of Turkey. The settlement of Turkey was so arranged as with the settlement of Bulgaria to open up the flank of Austria, and the settlement of Austria was arranged in such a way as to open up the most vulnerable flank of Germany. That is why we waited until we had settled the others first. So much for the side-shows. Forgive me for referring to them now. I have waited for this hour. I have been supposed to have been advocating little side-shows which frittered away the strength of this country upon unhelpful enterprises. You know why now. We wanted to get round by the back door to Germany. It helped those who were battering at the front door."

The peroration of this memorable address was not simply a decorative flourish. It said in brief what Mr. Lloyd George was to repeat and try to get recognized and applied in the long conferences on the peace. "Victory," he said, "has its snares and its burdens as well as defeat. The pride of victory may be as destructive as the bitterness of disappointment." Mr. Lloyd George's war service was complete. The long series of war speeches was closed. When we hear him again he is engaged in another species of fight, a contested election, through whose portal he passes to the hard and well-nigh desperate task of repairing a war-shattered world. ↓

CHAPTER XI

EPILOGUE

It is not easy to give a wise answer to a foolish question. To ask "Who won the war?" and to reply "Mr. Lloyd George" opens a door to endless idle disputation. No single individual, however powerful and illustrious, won the war. It was won by the national spirit and by the national resources. But without becoming the victims of the *lues Boswelliana* or the "disease of admiration," we may surely apply in some, though perhaps in a less positive and unlimited, degree what Macaulay wrote of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham: "That the national spirit rose to the emergency, that the national resources were contributed with unexampled cheerfulness, this was undoubtedly his work." And again the great Whig historian writes: "In a dark hour he [Chatham] sustained the spirit of the nation by the energy and ardour of his own." These tributes suggest to us the sort of praise which the Muse of History will legitimately accord to Mr. Lloyd George. In this sense his name will always be linked with the world war of 1914-1918 as the name of Chatham will always be linked with the French wars of the eighteenth century and, to take a foreign instance, the name of Bismarck with the Franco-German war.

And not only is it true that Mr. Lloyd George kept up the fighting spirit of the nation. He did more than that: he maintained the spirit of the nation on a high level of thought and aspiration. He lifted it above the crude instincts of hatred and vengeance. As already said, the secret of Mr. Lloyd George's power and influence has been in no small measure that religious element in his character

A VICTORY SPEECH

which is easier to illustrate from his speeches than to define. It is the instinct which disposes a man to regard earthly events and vicissitudes *sub specie aeternitatis*. He owed this gift or "charism" to his race and ancestry and to his early training. We can trace this deep steadying and moderating influence throughout Mr. Lloyd George's war record. It saved him, and through him it helped to save the people, from undue elation in the great hour of victory. Speaking at Leeds on December 7th, 1918, in the midst of the election campaign, he said of the great event :

"Do not let us look at it as though it were merely a cricket or a football match which we have won—something that we read of in the evening papers and put the colours of the winner on our breasts and go home, or elsewhere, and enjoy the victory, and the following morning get up with a headache and then return to our ordinary avocations as though nothing had happened. That is the wrong spirit in which to take this great war. It has been a great convulsion that has shaken the earth and shaken the nations. . . . Great powerful combinations that looked as firm as the Alpine rocks—they are shattered and scattered over the plains of Europe. Would you treat that as if it were merely a game? Do you think God does things of that kind merely to fill the columns of the evening papers? There is a great purpose in it, and do not let us forget it."

Mr. Lloyd George continued these wise counsels through the period of peace negotiations. He kept his own spirit free from revengeful and vindictive impulses and he helped others to do the same. It is impossible to approve of all Mr. Lloyd George's proceedings during the Peace Conferences. For example, he is credited even with establishing those conditions of undue secrecy amid which the discussions

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were carried on, much to the scandal and mischief of the smaller nations, who were as vitally interested in the issue of the palavers as the Great Powers themselves. Mr. Lloyd George's record is not perfect, but in the fundamentals he never went far astray.

It is said that in the scores of Bach's immortal works the letters "S.D.G." occur from time to time written in the great composer's hand: "To God alone be the glory"—that represents the spirit upon which, it may fairly be said, Mr. Lloyd George strove to base our national sentiment and policy in the years following the war. He stood for trust and reconciliation as against the suspicion and antagonism which prevailed among the nations. In his speech "pro Marcello" Cicero tells the conquering Cæsar that he seemed *ipsam victoriam vicisse*, "to have conquered his own victory"—that is, to have risen above the lower instincts which the triumph of one person or one nation over another may easily engender. Mr. Lloyd George himself quoted a true saying of Mazzini at a London celebration in honour of that patriot: "The morrow of the victory has more perils than its eve."

We have seen how even before the war ended the British statesman had begun to warn his country and the world against a vindictive peace. His entire influence was afterwards devoted to avoiding such a peace. Mr. Lloyd George's chief merit is his grasp of these essential principles, and it is no small addition that he has always had the courage to assert them in popular terms. M. Tardieu, in his book "The Truth about the Treaty," writes that "those who knew how to talk to the British Prime Minister could always bring him back to fundamental principles." In the detail and application of his principles Mr. Lloyd George may have been impulsive and uncertain amid the perplexed difficulties of European re-settlement, but from the principles themselves he never wavered. Mr. Robert Lansing seems at fault in his interpretation when he

THE EVE OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE

writes that "Mr. Lloyd George was vague as to his general principles, which accounted largely for the fluid state of his judgments."* The British statesman's mind and imagination move so nimbly, he is so free from a rigid and narrow obstinacy, that he often seems impulsive and inconstant and opportunist in his decisions. But in the things that greatly matter he never changes or hesitates. He voiced and embodied in all these post-war negotiations and conferences the spirit of true liberalism. All liberal-minded men in all nations came to regard him as their political prophet.

Nowhere is the essence of his teaching and policy better shown than in the Memorandum he issued in the spring of 1919, just on the eve of the most vital decisions of the Peace Conference. It is only when we remember that almost every word he then said was in the teeth of what most people had been saying and were still thinking in the Conference that we can understand the courage and independence of mind that went to the making of such a pronouncement.

"When nations," he wrote, "are exhausted by wars in which they have put forth all their strength and which leave them tired, bleeding and broken, it is not difficult to patch up a peace that may last until the generation which experienced the horrors of war has passed away. . . . What is difficult, however, is to draw up a peace which will not provoke a fresh struggle when those who have had practical experience of what war means have passed away. . . . You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force and her navy to that of a fifth-rate Power ; all the same, in the end, if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919, she will find means of exacting retribution from

* "The Big Four," page 79.

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her conquerors. The impression, the deep impression, made upon the human heart by four years of unexampled slaughter will disappear with the hearts upon which it has been marked by the terrible sword of the Great War. The maintenance of peace will then depend upon there being no causes of exasperation constantly stirring up the spirit of patriotism, of justice, or of fair play to achieve redress. Our terms may be severe, they may be stern and even ruthless, but at the same time they can be so just that the country on which they are imposed will feel in its heart that it has no right to complain. But injustice, arrogance, displayed in the hour of triumph, will never be forgotten nor forgiven."

It is almost pathetic, when we consider how the Treaty fell short of those ideals, to read Mr. Lloyd George's warning that no more Germans or Magyars should be transferred to non-German and non-Magyar domination than could possibly be helped. The peace, he went on to say, must do justice to the Allies ; it must be one which a German Government could sign with a fair hope and intention of fulfilling the obligations it involved, and it must contain no provocation of future wars.

How was it, then, that the Treaty failed to satisfy these requirements ? Why was the settlement in Poland, Silesia, East Prussia, Dantzic, Memel, the Saar and other regions so open to challenge ? There is no doubt that the Treaty would have been very different if Mr. Lloyd George could have had his way. But the same remark probably applies to President Wilson and M. Clemenceau. The Treaty was a compromise between conflicting ideals and objects. Moreover, it has been unreasonably condemned by people who have probably never opened the volume of five hundred pages in which it is contained. To these *à priori* critics Mr. Lloyd George would suggest that they should read the Treaty. Rather curiously, too, the Treaty

DIFFICULTIES OF THE TREATY MAKERS

has been debited with all the extravagances and shifting counsels in connexion with the subject of reparations. The Treaty came to no conclusions relating to Germany's payable capacity, but turned over the whole question to a Reparations Commission.*

The Treaty makers had indeed a task before them which in many respects passed the wit of man to accomplish. Peoples and economic interests were so entangled in various large territories that it was hopeless to apply to the problems involved that counsel of perfection, the rule of self-determination. The settlement made at Versailles has been unfairly condemned. No document so sinning against the principles of democracy as we are asked to believe that this Treaty sins could have been signed by President Wilson and General Smuts. It is true the American Senate did not ratify the Treaty, but that was for other reasons than those for which it is usually condemned. President Wilson, the austere and incorruptible, at any rate regarded it as on the whole a wise and just settlement of the vast problems submitted to the Allied statesmen.

Mr. Lloyd George strove continuously to bring the terms into conformity with the leading requirements he had so clearly laid down. He was not in any way inclined to neglect the interests of his own country and of the Allies. Indeed, to Mr. Robert Lansing, who writes a sketch of the British statesman, he seemed to be unduly preoccupied with the British claims.† But the British Prime Minister was sincerely concerned to make the Treaty such that Germany could sign it without hopeless reservations and lasting resentment. For example, he held out to the last against the Allied occupation of the Rhineland and the bridgeheads, and to the French invasion of the Ruhr he was uncompromisingly opposed.

* On this Commission it was expected that America would sit, and Mr. Lloyd George always deplored the absence of the great Republic from that body, from the League of Nations, and from the Conference of Genoa.

† See "The Big Four," page 79.

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It has been remarked that Mr. Lloyd George touched the zenith of his fame and influence in the Conference held in the historic and hospitable city of Genoa. No one could mingle with the representatives of the thirty-four nations then assembled without noting the high place held by the British statesman in the esteem of all liberal-minded persons in Allied or enemy countries. And it is equally true that never has the name of England stood higher in the councils of the civilized world.

The Conference of Genoa in its conception and purposes was an object-lesson in applied Liberalism. Mr. Lloyd George, sociable and genial himself, was always a great believer in face-to-face palavers among people who were inclined to quarrel. He gave amusing and homely reasons for this liking in a speech in London. "There are those," he said, "who would go back to the old diplomacy, who say: 'Let us get rid of Conferences; let us interchange dispatches and letters.' What happens? Each party states its own point of view. Instead of bringing parties nearer it too often hardens them in their convictions. You cannot have it out with a letter. You cannot argue with a dispatch. You cannot reason with a diplomatic message. Come face to face. I have a profound conviction and faith in the ultimate reason of man. I am an optimist. I believe in my fellow-men made in the image of God—that, if you bring them together to talk quietly and calmly in a room, reason prevails."*

Many a time at Genoa Mr. Lloyd George put this theory to the test, and by his exercise of humour and good-humour saved the Conference from perishing in misunderstandings and ill-temper. It was delightful to listen to his gentle chaff of the Bolshevist delegates, who, so far from resenting it, seemed pleased to be treated as fellow creatures and not as sinister and inhuman Frankensteins.

The British statesman never gave better evidence of

* Speech at the Central Hall, January 21, 1922.

THE CONFERENCE AT GENOA

the liberalism which pervaded his whole nature than in this Conference which he proposed at the meetings of the Supreme Council at Cannes at the beginning of 1922. That Council, which was still the chief executive authority in Europe, was of course composed of Allied representatives only. It tended therefore to maintain the old division between Allies and Central Powers, between the victors and the vanquished, and to foster the psychological atmosphere that went with that cleavage. Mr. Lloyd George thought at the beginning of 1922 that it was getting time to confound that distinction and to bring two hundred million human beings who lived in Russia and Germany once more within the comity of nations.

It was a great idea, this ecumenical gathering of the nations in which Russia and Germany were to have an equal status with the rest. If it failed of its more specific purposes, it succeeded in the more general objects of bringing people together who otherwise would have become more and more estranged and hostile, and a growing danger to the peace of the world. From the early days of the peace negotiations Mr. Lloyd George had insisted on regarding the Russian people as human beings and fellow creatures, despite a revolution about whose character and ideas most people in Europe were wholly ignorant. He spoke in the House of Commons of "the Russian people, a gallant people, a loyal people, a patient people, a people capable of greater heights of unselfish devotion than almost any race in the world, as they demonstrated during the first two or three years of the Great War, when they sacrificed themselves in order to save the Allies." *

Steeped in liberalism are the resolutions concerning the proposed conference which Mr. Lloyd George managed to carry in the Supreme Council at Cannes. "Nations," one of them declared, "can claim no right to dictate to each other regarding the principles on which they are to

* Speech on May 25, 1922.

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regulate their system of ownership, internal economy, and government. It is for every nation to choose for itself the system which it prefers in this respect." But other resolutions also insisted on the duty of every state which claims to form part of the society of nations to meet its public debts, to restore or compensate all foreign interests for loss or damage caused to them when property has been confiscated and withheld, and to provide a proper judicial system enforcing impartially commercial and other contracts. Mr. Lloyd George never allows his sentiments and emotions to overshadow the claims of justice and the obligations of public morality. But he had a big fight at Genoa, especially against the French delegation and Government, who were under the direction of a totally different set of ideas, and intent, not without some historic excuse, on national security beyond all other considerations.

"We are not here," said Mr. Lloyd George in his first speech to the Genoa Conference in the hall of the ancient palace of San Giorgio—which it was humorously proposed to rechristen in the name of "San Lloyd Giorgio"—"we are not here as allied or enemy states. We are not here as belligerents and neutrals. We have not come together as Monarchists or Republicans or Sovietists. We are assembled as the representatives of all the nations and peoples of Europe to seek out in common the best methods of restoring the shattered prosperity of this continent, so that we may each build up in his own land, each in his own way, a better condition of things for our people than the world has yet enjoyed." But the British statesman had a big job to secure equal conditions in the Council Chamber for Russia and Germany. Some people seemed to think it possible to keep the authorized representatives of over two hundred million people in ante-rooms and on doorsteps.

Mr. Lloyd George's attitude to Russia at this time is

THE RUSSIAN PROBLEM

well worth studying by those who are interested in political thought. He was deeply impressed with the danger of boycotting and stigmatizing as non-respectable two great peoples, the Russian and the German. "You have Germany and Russia," he said, "who are in a condition of semi-antagonism to the rest of Europe. There is a state of suspended and barely suspended conflict. That means two-thirds of Europe—Germany and Russia—and, let me speak quite frankly, anybody who imagines that you can permanently, by any combination, keep down two great peoples, representing two-thirds of Europe, must be either blind or blinkered." Mr. Lloyd George knew that trade is the great path-finder for mutual intercourse between peoples, and that until Russia was brought once more into economic and commercial relations with the rest of the world, the existing danger must continue. The danger was not imaginary. He gave many warnings against the prospect of a close alliance between these two peoples, of "a hungry Russia," in his own epigrammatic expression, "equipped by an angry Germany."*

The aloofness of Russia from the general life of Europe became very evident when the delegates came to Genoa. It was discovered that they knew almost nothing of the state of public opinion in the West—had, indeed, scarcely heard of the great conferences that had been already held, and that Russia had been living almost as remote from the other European nations as in the days before Peter the Great.

Above all it was needful to revive Russian trade with the rest of the world. Yet Mr. Lloyd George found himself brought up against obstinate prejudices. Many people were opposed to any trading with Bolshevik Russia lest such intercourse should seem to condone the revolution which had taken place in that country. It was an attitude of moral disapproval. Russia ought to be ashamed

* Speech at the Olimpia Restaurant, Genoa, April, 1922. See the author's "The Genoa Conference," pp. 116-122, for this interesting address.

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of herself for having had such an upheaval and for having committed so many crimes in the course of it. People of this habit of mind had no scruples about drawing up an indictment against a whole people.

The liberal tone of mind is very different. I spell the word continuously with a small letter, because, though that tone of mind is characteristic in general of the Liberal Party, it is not wholly confined to that party, and because at this time, when Mr. Lloyd George was regarded as the greatest world-exponent of liberalism, one-half of the party in England which bore that title was repudiating him and all his works. This question of trade with Russia once more illustrates the difference between the liberal and non-liberal mentality. The former was not disposed to denounce or interfere with the internal policy of a great nation. It mounted on no moral pedestal nor looked down in contempt and intolerance upon people who held other views. It believed that great peoples did not revolt and carry out revolutionary changes without good reason, and that in the end the peoples would be found to be right. As regards the view that Bolshevism was imposed on the Russian people at the top and against its will, it is sufficient to say that that very seldom happens and, as the Lord Chancellor of England remarked to a gathering at Genoa, Bolshevism had stayed long enough to show that it was not a mere temporary experiment.

But Mr. Lloyd George's position was that, however we might dislike and condemn the form of government existing in Russia, that was no reason for boycotting the Russian people and treating them as moral and social outcasts. Something has been said already about approximations between the opinions and record of Mr. Lloyd George and William Pitt the Younger. A curiously similar problem had arisen at the end of the eighteenth century in the case of revolutionary France. Then also there were many non-liberal people who thought the revo-

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lution had placed France outside the pale of human society, and that with such a country there could be no peace but only war until she brought her policy more into accord with our own views on government and property and social arrangements in general. Pitt was for peace with revolutionary France, as Mr. Lloyd George in these later days was for peace with revolutionary Russia. And at both dates both statesmen had to contend with a strongly entrenched spirit of intolerance.

Happily, Mr. Pitt's speeches enshrine more than one *locus classicus* on this subject. Mr. Lloyd George, in his speech to the House of Commons on April 3rd, 1922, quoted an apt passage. It is well worth reading to-day because it is an instance of truly liberal thought in the days before the modern Liberal Party had come into being. Mr. Pitt said :

“ I have no hesitation in avowing, for it would be idleness and hypocrisy to conceal it, that for the sake of mankind in general and to gratify those sentiments which can never be eradicated from the human heart, I should see with pleasure and satisfaction the termination of a Government whose conduct and whose origin is such as we have seen that of the Government of France. But that is not the object, that ought not to be the principle of the war, whatever wish I may entertain in my own heart ; and whatever opinion I may think is fair or manly to avow, I have no difficulty in stating that violent and odious as is the character of that Government I verily believe, in the present state of Europe, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, if, by the blessing of Providence, our perseverance and our resources should enable us to make peace with France upon terms in which we taint not our character, in which we do not abandon the sources of our wealth, the means of our strength, the defence of

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what we already possess ; if we maintain our equal pretensions, and assert that rank which we are entitled to hold among the nations—the moment peace can be obtained on such terms, be the form of government in France what it may, peace is desirable, peace is then anxiously to be sought.”

These words, and the policy they expressed, were fully adopted by this later Prime Minister. We may detest Bolshevism and its works as we please, and there is good reason for that detestation, but English people of those days were just as horrified and repelled by the deeds of the French Reign of Terror. In both cases the British statesman took the liberal and therefore the wiser and safer view of the problem.

It is not possible here to show in detail how Mr. Lloyd George dealt with the post-war problems by the method of applied liberalism. That he did not succeed in impressing his views more fully on the Treaty of Versailles, that his objects in calling together the thirty-four nations to Genoa were but imperfectly realized, need not affect our appreciation of the spirit, of the “sweetness and light” which marked the speeches and policies of the British statesman in these days. There is no doubt that largely through the influence and eloquence of Mr. Lloyd George thousands in every nation of Europe or the world got to know the meaning and purpose of British liberalism. On this wider educational ground alone the international indaba at Genoa was no failure.

In reviewing Mr. Lloyd George’s career we are impressed with the power which the spoken word still exerts in our political life. We are still ruled, as Carlyle would say, by “vocables.” Mr. Lloyd George has owed his steady rise from a humble origin to the highest position and influence in world-politics mainly to his gift as a speaker. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that that

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gift is merely vocal and verbal. The old philosophic definition of the orator as a *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, "a good man skilled in speaking," must be borne in mind. It is not sufficient in our politics that a man should have a swivel-mounted tongue, that he should be able to tickle the ears of King Demos as in the days of the old Greek democracies. With us the clever speaker has to be also a "good man," that is, he must have wisdom and judgment and religious feeling and, not least of all, temperament and a sense of humour.

Few men have fulfilled these requirements more happily than Mr. Lloyd George. He is "skilled in speaking." In fact he runs the danger of carrying cleverness a little too far. He is apt to be much too fond of the alliterative and the epigrammatic, and the British public is very quick to detect anything that approaches to oratorical claptrap. But Mr. Lloyd George has been saved from too much errancy in this direction by his sincere purpose, by his true literary, one might almost say his poetic, taste, and also by his perennial sense of humour.

His physical equipment for parliamentary and platform success is remarkable. His voice is at once musical and penetrating, and is capable of infinite modulation in accordance with the speaker's changing mood. No one is ever repelled by a suggestion of the theatrical and vulgar in his speaking; yet no professional actor ever surpassed him in elocution and gesture. Those who hear Mr. Lloyd George for the first time are surprised at the amount of *actio* or gesticulation which he employs as an auxiliary to the spoken word.

It is interesting to compare in this respect the two men who have led the Liberal Party during these past years. Mr. Asquith's oratory wears the Roman toga. It is quite exceptionally Latin and non-vernacular in its vocabulary, and moves with a dignity which sometimes borders rather perilously on the pompous. To vary the similitude we may

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say that it reminds us of the steady rhythmic tread of the Roman legion, while Mr. Lloyd George's style of speaking has rather the grace of the swift and varied movement of the light mounted troops who were the scouts and screens of the heavy marchers. Both styles of oratory have their effect, but Mr. Lloyd George's is best suited for daily and popular use.

Mr. Lloyd George's speeches generally bear the stamp of careful premeditation. Herein he differs from the great War Minister of the eighteenth century who, we are told, was no speaker of set speeches, and whose few prepared discourses, like his panegyric on General Wolfe, were complete failures. Mr. Lloyd George is understood to be a weak extemporiser. Yet there was one occasion in the Genoa Conference at least when this assumption was not justified. It was in the opening session, when a warm-tempered harangue by M. Barthou threatened to wreck the Conference almost before it had cleared the harbour. Mr. Tchitcherin, the chief Soviet delegate, had declared in favour of holding a Conference unlimited in its scope of reference. The French delegation would not hear of this or of other proposals of the kind, and an open breach was thus made in the Conference at which the assembled delegates of thirty-four nations sat aghast.

It was Mr. Lloyd George who stepped into that breach and restored good temper and tranquillity. The storm had risen so suddenly on to a blue sky that his speech must have been wholly impromptu. Few statesmen could have effected such an object so simply and surely. He gently chaffed the chafed Soviet leader. "The Conference," he said, "has already got as large a cargo as it can carry. Every civilized country marks a load-line on its merchant-ships in order to show how heavily they can be laden. Mr. Tchitcherin must not remove the load-line. If he does he may sink the ship and perhaps find himself among the drowned." "Let Mr. Tchitcherin," he said, "finish this

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voyage first and go home with all the ship can carry from here. We shall then welcome him in another voyage when we see what sort of a passenger he is. I have no doubt that he will be agreeable and I have no doubt that he will work well." This and other gentle satire was much enjoyed by the Bolshevik delegates, with whom Mr. Lloyd George soon became a great favourite.

It is a well-worn observation that Mr. Lloyd George's power as a speaker and as a leader of men springs from a dynamic and magnetic personality, the secret of which it is impossible to isolate and define. The ancients believed that eloquence, like wisdom, could be taught. Yet its most essential attributes are incommunicable. The writer has drawn most of his illustrations from the Genoa Conference because it was there that Mr. Lloyd George found the widest and most varied opportunity for the exercise of these personal and political qualities. He was always the centre of interest in those ethnic and fateful gatherings. It was curious to compare the oratorical manner of the chief British delegate with that of other orators from divers nations. A few low murmured words or even an aposiopesis, or flash of silence, in the midst of a speech by Mr. Lloyd George seemed to make a deeper impression than the most torrential utterance of the French and other orators.

More than once did Mr. Lloyd George by the exercise of this wonderful influence save the Genoa Conference. There was one still more perilous occasion following the Russo-German agreement at Rapallo when the Conference seemed to be foundering. He at once called a meeting of the world's press at the Palace of St. George. He himself arrived with an air and demeanour suggestive of anything but death and disaster. "God is in His Heaven," were his first words, "and the Genoa Conference lives and is going strong."

Of this fortifying and upholding power, this unfailing

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confidence and cheerfulness, this humour and good-humour, the nation had the fullest advantage in the dark days during and following the war. Mr. Lloyd George fills a large space in the life and affections of Great and Greater Britain. He is an asset which cannot be allowed to lie idle or to depreciate. The nation may need again that *sursum corda*, in the widest sense of the old Christian watchword, which Mr. Lloyd George proclaimed so bravely and inspiringly in the hours of our deepest need.

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President Wilson's original "Fourteen Points" were as follows :—

I. Open covenants of peace openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas outside the territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers, and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory, and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy, and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing ; and more than a welcome assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded to

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Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their goodwill, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act, the whole structure and validity of international law is for ever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed, and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interests of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the first opportunity of autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated, occupied territories restored, Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea, and the relations of the several Balkan States to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality, and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan States should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life, and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish State should be erected, which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure

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access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A General Association of Nations must be formed under specific covenant for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike.

No. XIV, it will be noticed, foreshadows the covenant of the League of Nations afterwards embodied in the Treaty of Versailles. It will also be noted that there is no mention of indemnities in these points.

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